

FAYS AND
LEGENDS
OF
CHESHIRE

BY
JOHN LEIGH

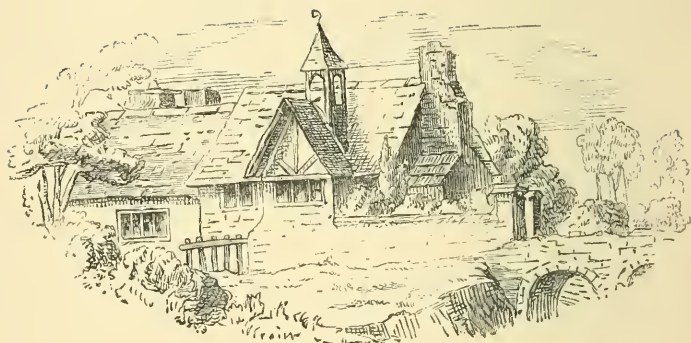


THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES



O. xx. 14

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



CLAYTON HALL.



AYS AND



LEGENDS

OF

CHESHIRE.

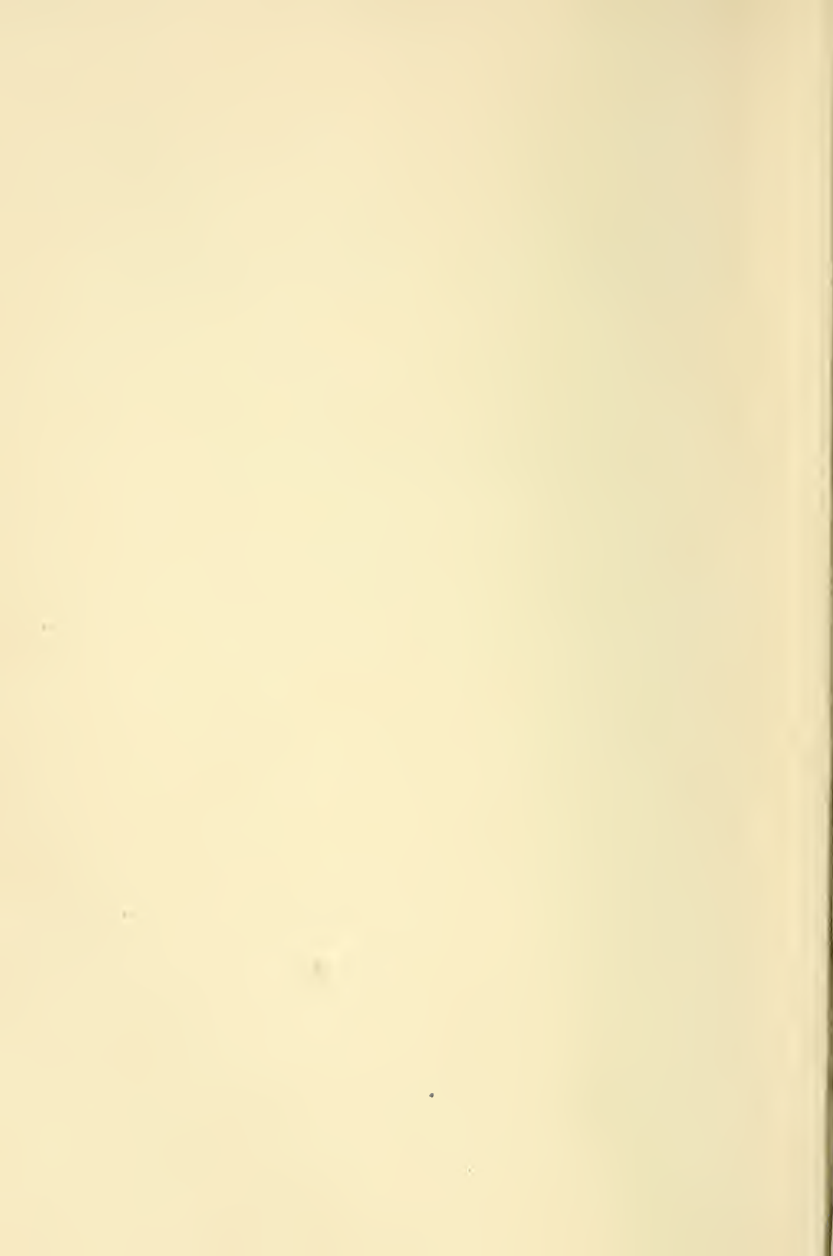
WITH

OTHER POEMS & BALLADS.

BY

JOHN LEIGH.

JOHN HEYWOOD, EXCELSIOR BUILDINGS, RIDGEFIELD, MANCHESTER.
AND 18, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, LONDON, E.C.



W 885
L 5252

TO
ELEANOR SOPHIA EGERTON
LADY CUNLIFFE
THESE
"LAYS AND LEGENDS"
ARE INSCRIBED,
WITH THE KINDEST WISHES
OF HER KINSMAN,
THE AUTHOR.

544918
FOLKLORE



P R E F A C E.

A FEW of the following Ballads were written during visits to Lyme in the lifetime of the late Mr. Legh, and at the suggestion of Mrs. Legh, and appeared in a small volume printed in 1861, entitled "Sir Percy Legh." Two of them, with some slight alterations, were included in the "Ballads and Legends of Cheshire," collected by the late Colonel Egerton Leigh, and published in 1867.

So many of the old houses in the two counties palatine have disappeared within the last half century, and so many of the legends and traditions connected with them have been lost, that it is desirable the latter, whenever discovered, should receive either in prose or verse some form calculated to give them permanency. Those to which the author has endeavoured to give a metrical form have been communicated to him by friends in possession of the houses to which they relate, or who were in some other way connected with them.

Looking at the long descents of many families in Lancashire and Cheshire, and knowing the active part taken by these families in all the great wars and stirring incidents of their country, it cannot but be that there are numerous Legends and Traditions of much romantic interest in remembrance, though many of these may be confined to the hereditary tenants and hinds on their estates rather than in the possession of their owners. Colonel Egerton Leigh, in his inquiries respecting Cheshire Legends, found the latter to be very much the case. Two charming local Ballads from the pens of local poets, the "Wild Rider of Alkrington," by Sam Bamford, and the "Ladye of Asshawe," by James Macdougall, have appeared in our time, and it is a matter of regret that others of our local poets have not turned their attention a little more in this direction.



CONTENTS.

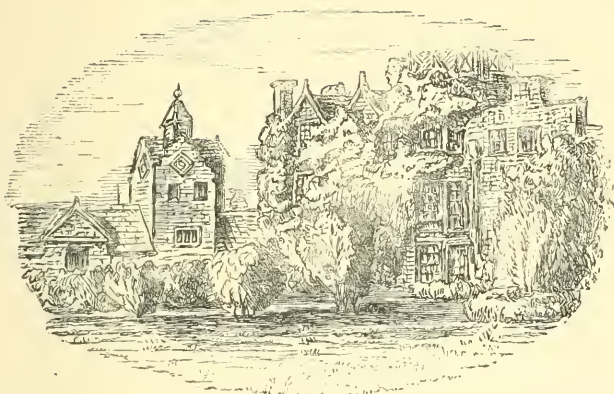
	PAGE
THE YOUNG CAVALIER	9
THE LOVES OF SIR ROBERT BARTON AND MARGERY LEGH...	27
BRAMHALL HALL..	37
THE PALMER AND THE PEVERIL	49
THE HERMIT OF KERSAL CELL.....	63
SIR PERCY LEGH	73
THE RED RIDER.....	87
MARPLE HALL	95
CASTLETON	103
MISCELLANEOUS POEMS:—	
THE MAIDEN'S REVERIE	121
THE MONK	125
A CHRISTMAS DREAM	130
THE RAILWAY ENGINE	132
INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF A MANCHESTER WORTHY...	133
TO * * *	138
LINES ON RECEIVING FLOWERS FROM A YOUNG LADY	139
LINES TO THE LATE COLONEL EGERTON LEIGH ...	141
LINES TO A BENEVOLENT LADY.....	143
LINES ON VISITING THE GRAVE OF A GOOD ABBOT ...	144
THE PEN AND THE PENCIL.....	146
LINES TO A FRIEND IN SCOTLAND.....	148
ON THE BREAKING-OUT OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN	
WAR	150
AN EVENING REVERIE	153

THE YOUNG CAVALIER:

A LEGEND OF MARPLE HALL.

BALLAD OF THE YOUNG CAVALIER.

IT is said that a daughter of Henry Bradshaw, of Marple, brother to the President, was engaged to a young Cavalier officer, with whose family the Bradshaws had long been intimate. His fate gave rise to the following legend. A portrait on the staircase, at Marple Hall, is still shown as that of the unhappy lady.



MARPLE HALL.



THE YOUNG CAVALIER.

THE rising sun had purpled o'er the morn,
And tipped with living fire the burnished hills,
Down whose bright flanks the crystal torrents ran,
And leapt into the vale in gladsome rills.

The sparkling grass, too, was with diamonds hung,
An emerald setting to a splendent sheen,
That nature had with art consummate flung,
And lavish wealth upon the vivid green.

A countless multitude of glistening orbs
Studded the surface of the verdant lea,
Rich as the glowing garniture with which
Night gems the placid bosom of the sea.

And as he mounted up, the sweetest choir
That ever greeted human ear was heard,
A melody harmonious was yblent
Of rustling leaf, bees' hum, and song of bird.

From tuneful throats the little warblers poured
Their orisons unto the rising orb,
And plumed their wings, and bathèd in sweet dew,
Before the sultry air should it absorb.

And as the golden hue spread o'er the sky
The lark sprang up to meet the lengthening ray,
And carolled all its love in gleesome song,
And with its wings beat time unto its lay.

And from the lofty poplar's waving bough
The throstle shouted forth his wild refrain,
Waking the landscape with his broken notes,
In sweetest cadence murmuring then his pain.

The startled blackbird from the thorny brake
With sharp and twittering cry a shelter sought,
Hiding her yellow bill and plumage dark
Where in dense holly she her nest ywrought.

And from the leafy tops of towering limes
The noisy rook disturbed the tuneful choir,
And sailed around his young with sportive grace,
And flapped his glossy wing and soared yet higher.

And flutt'ring o'er the mead with gaudy wings
The painted butterfly sped on his way,
His span of life but measured by the hour,
A century crowded in one little day.

The rippling brook, with meadow-sweet o'er hung,
And blue forget-me-not, that onward sped,
Meandered 'neath its tangled canopy,
And music sweet made with its pebbly bed.

And on the fitful wind, in sudden gusts,
The sound of falling waters was yborne,
From where the mists in silvery wreaths yet hung,
Adown the valley in the early morn.

And in the bright green woods the rustling breeze
Made music with the harps that nature gave,
And lusty spring thrust forth his vigorous shoots,
That nourished were by autumn's leafy grave.

And yet in all the joyous throng was none
That was so gay in heart as one that sped
Along the turfy lanes that fringed were
With spreading ferns, bluebells, and lychnis red.

And as he pricked his steed he trolled his song,
A roundelay that was of merrie cast,
And of his ladie-love the burden was,
And to her bower he quickly did him haste.

And down his neck, as then the fashion was,
His glossy hair in clust'ring ringlets fell,
And played with the breeze and glistened bright,
So that its hue not easy 'twas to tell.

And on his ruddy cheek, that was embrowned
By long exposure under fervid skies,
Sat youth and health, that were a joyous twain,
And laughter aye dwelt in his deep-blue eyes.

And jauntily upon his head was set
His plumèd hat, wide brimmed, and high in crown ;
And round his neck he had a silken tie
From which a collar of rich lace hung down.

His doublet was of buff, of fair device,
With gold and silver love-knots 'broidered o'er ;
His wide and open sleeves with ruffles girt,
And round his waist a crimson sash he wore.

His baldrick, that with gems was richly dight,
Across his breast was from his shoulder slung ;
And from his side his rapier long and bright
Within its silver-mounted scabbard hung.

His boots, whose spreading tops were fringed with lawn
His trunk-hose met, deep-slashèd at the side ;
Pistols he carried at his saddle-bow,
And ready petronel with barrel wide.

In sooth, he was as gay a Cavalier
As e'er delighted maiden's eye to see,
And jingled at each step his horse's gear,
As he pricked onward over hill and lea.

And as the fiercer rays of noon shot down,
He sought the river's bank, and slacked his speed,
And of the living waters drank his fill,
And loosed the bridle of his thirsty steed.

Then onward still he dashed upon his way,
Nor sought again the beaten track to leave,
Till lengthening shadows on his pathway thrown,
And darkening woods, betokened coming eve.

And as he mergèd from a bosky tract,
Whose deepening vistas warned him of delay,
A lovely valley opened to his view,
To scan whose beauties lingering did he stay.

A flower-bespangled glade of brightest green,
Adown whose length a placid river rolled,
Upon whose breast the setting sun had cast
A flood of light, of crimson shot with gold,

Stretched out before him, till in distance lost,
Its high and craggy sides with verdure hung.
There the wild clematis its flowers flung out,
And there the fragrant honeysuckle clung ;

And on the summit high were lofty trees
Of elm, and oak, and beech, and spreading lime,
Upon whose doddered trunks the lichen grey
Told they had flourished in a northern clime.

And midst the trees rose up a quaint old pile
That overlooked the beauteous vale below,
And gleaming through the dark a light was seen
That brought unto the horseman's cheek a glow,

For well he knew the bower from whence it came,
And who it was sat in that dainty room,
And guided by the light he turned his horse,
E'en as the landscape faded in the gloom,

And up the road that led to Marple Hall
With gentle word he urged his jaded steed,
Resolved to claim his wonted welcome there,
And gain the rest they both so much did need.

"How now, young sir, what brings ye to this house?
Is Marple's Hall a place for such as you?
And Henry Bradshaw, too, a fitting host
For one who to the faithless Charles is true?"
"I bear despatches for the king, fair sir.
But what they are I know no more than you."

"Well, well, thou'rt welcome, boy! Thy father's kin
Shall ever in this house a greeting find,
And none more than thyself, whose earliest youth,
Here spent, calls pleasant memories to my mind.

"It grieves me much in that I cannot bear
Arms in my sovereign's service in this strife. -
Fain would I at this time his livery wear,
And with my own defend my liege's life.

“My duty to my country holds me here—
Nor 'gainst its liberties I'll lend my arm :
I hold the law to be above the king,
Though I would save his majesty from harm.”

“I hold my sovereign's will my highest law—
To Heaven's anointed will I hold me leal :
A soldier's duty is but to obey,
Not his to judge what's for his country's weal.”

“Right well I know thou art as brave a youth
As ever won his spurs on bloody field.
But come we into supper ! There, I trow,
With willing hand a trenchant blade thou'lt wield.”

He led the way into a spacious hall,
Upon whose panelled walls of polished oak,
In various patterns carved, were seen the gear
Of bows and hunting weapons, that bespoke

A fondness for the chase, whilst heads of deer,
With broadly arching antlers, there were found,
And lances, dags, and guns for sterner work,
With brightly gleaming armour hung around.

And on a massive table, covered o'er
With whitest linen, ample store was spread
Of ven'son pasty, beef, and wholesome bread,
The goodly fare on which our fathers fed.

The shining black-jacks, filled with foaming ale,
Upon the sideboard stood, all carved o'er,
Whilst the more curiously devised armoire
The sparkling glass and splendid silver bore.

Answering the summons to the evening meal,
Wellnigh before the bell had ceased its din,
In flowing vest, that swept the polished floor,
The sweet and gentle Esther glided in.

Her lovely cheeks were quick suffused o'er
With maiden blushes, as she saw the guest ;
With timid glance her hand to him she gave,
Then took her place at table with the rest.

A simple grace was said, and all sat down,
Yet many an ardent glance the lover stole
Towards the beauteous maiden who there sat,
Who was the light and mistress of his soul.

And in her heart she loved the gallant youth,
And loved the cause in which he was engaged—
Her sympathies were to her sovereign given
In the unhappy war that then was waged.

And though she dreaded lest, in evil hour,
Her liege's arms should with her kindred's clash,
She would not turn her lover from his path,
Nor deem his dangerous enterprises rash.

The supper over, at her father's call
She sang the songs he loved, and touched her lute.
The Cavalier joined in. How could he list
To her sweet melody, and yet be mute?

And then they sang the songs of earlier days,
They both had loved, when brighter prospects beamed ;
And as their voices through each other thrilled,
Their eyes with love's expressive fondness gleamed.

And one a lay of times long past they sang,
When chivalrie with love did oft oppose,
And many a maiden fell to grief a prey,
And many a gallant knight to Paynim foes :

“Sir Guy to the Holy Land hath gone,
And his ladie-love sits in her bower ;
From her eyes downcast the tears fall fast
As she sits in her lonely tower.

“Sir Guy speeds over the briny wave,
And his ladie-love weepeth alone ;
Through the darksome night she wailleth his flight
With many a piteous moan.

“Sir Guy hath gained the Moslem shore,
And his ladie-love droops in her home ;
She wringeth her hands as she thinks of the strands
Where breaketh the wild sea foam.

“Sir Guy bears him well mid the clashing blades,
For he loveth the strife of war ;
And his ladie-love pales as she lists to the tales
The Palmer hath brought from afar.

“A warrior sinks on the sanguine plain,
And his life-blood welletth fast ;
And a maid without peer lies stretched on her bier,
And hath found there rest at last.”

And as they sang, with noiseless tread the dame
Swift glided from the hall, in anxious dread,
Lest in the missives by the gallant borne
Should lurk some danger o'er her husband's head.

She called her waiting-woman to her aid,
With her concerted how 'twere best to gain
Possession of the letters, which, unchecked,
She feared might bring disaster in their train.

By dexterous hands the saddle-bags were searched,
And stealthily their contents borne away ;
Portentous-looking documents they seemed,
As closely sealed they on the table lay.

With care and skill the dame unlocked the seals,
And found confirmed the worst she had surmised :
Her husband and his friends therein denounced,
And of their persons seizure quick advised.

“Ho, Christopher ! thou lov’st thy master well,
And wouldst not see him brought to instant ill ;
These letters that thou seest, sent to the king,
Will speedily this hall with soldiers fill.

“At earliest dawn our guest departeth hence ;
The river ford ’tis thine to guide him o’er ;
Sink thou his saddle-bags in deepest part ;
Take care these letters never reach the shore.

“This weight will aid thee in thy loving task,
And guerdon good reward thy service done.”
The servitor a low obeisance made—
“Fear not,” he said, and left the dame alone.

Resealed, the letters then were reconveyed,
And night drew o’er the scene her sable pall ;
In slumber steeped each busy brain was still,
And silence reigned supreme in Marple Hall.

Scarce had the morning streaked the eastern sky,
When from his bed the Cavalier upsprung.
A sylph-like form awaited him below,
And to his breast in fond embrace she clung.

With whispered cautions, and a long long kiss,
At length the horseman tore himself away.
The wily Christopher led forth his steed,
Chiding the rider for his long delay.

The beauteous Esther to her chamber fled,
And from her window watched his fading form,
Yet started as she saw the broadened stream,
Swollen by the waters of some distant storm.

"I heard naught in the night, good Christopher ;
And yet some downfall on the neighb'ring hills
This rushing torrent but too plainly tells.
It rises even yet, methinks, and fills

"Its banks near to the brim ! I trust the ford
We'll strike, my worthy friend, or this wild tide
My good Rinaldo here, and I, must breast,
Though 'twere as Danube's waters deep and wide."

"No fear we'll find the ford," in surly tones
The servitor rejoined, and led the steed
To where the eddies marked the river's depth.
"Now, plunge in here, and of thy course take heed,

"To yonder brink the ford will lead thee straight."
The trustful rider, suddenly immersed,
Too late the treason and the peril knew,
Yet rising from the waves his horse he urged

To breast the current, whose impetuous course
Soon swept him to the centre of the stream ;
And here, alas ! his saddle-girths gave way,
Parted by treacherous knife ; and then, a scream,

Wild, shrill, and agonised, came down the vale,
As sank the helpless soldier 'neath the tide !
So died he in his earliest manhood's prime—
A shriek his requiem from his hapless bride.

Stretched on the floor the beauteous Esther lay,
And bubbled from her lips a crimson stream,
Whilst from her straining eyes a fitful glare
Showed reason gone, her future life a dream.

Oft by the river's bank a fleeting form,
With hair dishevelled and in bright array,
Is seen to wander, with uncertain step
And frantic gestures, at the break of day ;

And in the stillness of the moonlit night,
Floating through the woods, is heard a lay
Of more than human sweetness, rising high,
In dulcet notes receding then away.

And as the hind pursues his homeward track
The silver melody awakes his ear ;
With hastening steps he lists the syren song
In wondering ravishment and trepid fear.

And from the terrace of the ancient hall
The weird-like music trembles through the air,
Sad and mournful, yet divinely soft,
As of a spirit in its last despair.

THE
LOVES OF SIR ROBERT BARTON
AND MARGERY LEGH:

SHOWING HOW A MISADVENTURE ENDED HAPPILY.

*BALLAD OF THE LOVES OF SIR ROBERT BARTON
AND MARGERY LEGH.*

MARGERY, daughter of Sir Peter Legh, of Lyme and Haydock, knighted at Leith, 36 Henry VIII., married Sir Robert Barton, of Smithells Hall, near Bolton, to whose family it came by the marriage of Joan, heir of Sir Rafe Radcliffe, with Robert Barton of Holme, Esq., in the reign of King Henry VII., and was carried by Grace, sole daughter and heir of Thomas Barton, Esq., the last male heir, to Henry, eldest son of Thomas Lord Viscount Fauconberg, who died 20th May, 1647.

A custom was formerly observed at Lyme of driving the deer round the park about midsummer, or rather earlier, collecting them in a body before the house, and then making them cross a piece of water. The same custom tradition reports to have been practised at Townley, the seat of a collateral line of Legh, in times long past. There is a copperplate engraving at Lyme representing this custom.



THE LOVES OF SIR ROBERT BARTON
AND MARGERY LEGH.

FLOATED a lay on the evening air,
A lay of the blithest melodie ;
And never reclined a maid more fair
Than sang thus under the greenwood tree :

“ Oh, I love to roam o’er the bright green lea,
Where the birds carol wildly and all is free,
To follow the course of the murmuring brooks
Through their quiet glens and their shady nooks.

“ I love to bound o’er the bonny brown moor,
And to gather the heather-bells,
And look within for the tiny forms
That sport in their faëry cells.

“ Oh, I love to gaze on the sunlit spray,
As it plays on the green-clad rocks,
And the hue of every gem and flower
In varied beauty mocks.

“And the forest glade hath charms for me,
And I love, in its shady bowers,
To while away the livelong day,
And dream through the fleeting hours.

“And I will roam through the forest green,
Or on moss-grown bank recline,
For there’s never a knight in this land, I ween,
Hath a claim on this heart of mine.

“So I’ll remain a merrie merrie maid,
And list to no lover’s tongue :
There’s never a knight in this fair countrie
Shall hold me a captive long.”

“Right merrilie sung,” a voice now rung
Quick in the maiden’s ear;
“An’ thou hold thy resolve, no priest will absolve
Thee of broken hearts, I fear.”

“Oh, I shall be mistress of many lands,
And they will be mine own.”
“And what will thy broad lands do for thee
When thou art sad and lone?

“Oh, fleetly pass the summer hours,
And fleetly passeth the day !
When winter comes thy bonnie brown locks
Will all be silver and grey.”

“Now art thou not a gallant knight,
To tell a maiden this,
To tell her of the lonesome night
When all her days are bliss.

“And art thou not a gallant knight
To tell me this at Lyme,
To tell me of the winter’s blight
All in my summer’s prime.”

Then up she sprang and left her lute
Under the greenwood tree,
With rapid steps she gained the hall—
The knight sat pensivelie.

* * * * *

Hark ! what mean those yells and shouts,
Those footsteps clattering near ?
Like the rush of the whirlwind on they come,
The bounding wild red deer.

One moment’s pause, then in they plunge,
Deep in the watery surge,
And lave their sides in the cooling flood,
Reluctant to emerge.

But urgèd on by yells and shouts
They climb the neighbouring shore,
Shake from their sides the dripping spray,
Then rush on as before.

And now grown fierce they madly bound
O'er hill and over plain,
And fleetly leave the distanced throng,
The greenwood shade to gain.

Their flashing blood-shot eyes now tell
How fierce hath grown their wrath :
The boldest man in all that crowd
Would fear to cross their path.

* * * * *

A maiden and a knight reclined
Under the greenwood tree,
When a rushing sound was heard behind
Approaching rapidlie. ,

And on they came, with rapid bounds,
Their wild eyes flashing fire :
The foremost stag his antlers low'red
To vent on them his ire.

Quickly o'er the maiden threw
The knight his stalwart frame,
To shield her from the maddened deer
That onward rushing came.

The maiden in her terror swooned,
The knight his weapon drew,
And as the antler pierced his side
His enemy he slew.

But from his wide and gaping wound
The blood was welling fast,
And deadly faint the knight now felt,
And swooned away at last.

The maiden slowly oped her eyes,
And gently raised her head :
The knight was stretchèd by her side,
And lay as he were dead.

She tried to stop the welling blood
That still flowed from his side :
Oh, I treated thy love right scornfullie !
Oh, would that I had died !”

And now the crowd came hurrying on,
Amazed the sight to see :
They carried the knight into the hall,
A leech fetchèd speedilie.

And long Sir Robert Barton lay,
His life in jeopardie,
And ever at his side was seen
The lovely Margaret Legh.

And when at last he oped his eyes,
The glance that met his own
Told him all the maiden felt,
The love she might not own.

And now the hours flew swiftly by,
 The knight his suit still pressed,
 The maiden blushed, and gently laid
 Her head upon his breast.

“ I know that thou hast loved me long,
 And wouldst for me have died ;
 And now, oh, take me to thy heart,
 Thy loving, willing bride.”

More brightly green now seemed the woods,
 More brightly green the lea,
 And softly murmured the summer leaves
 All on the greenwood tree ;

The heather-bell more purple hung
 On the wide and bonnie moor,
 And the skylark carolled forth his song
 More sweetly than before ;

And lovelier far now seemed the spray
 As it danced in the bright sunshine ;
 And the moss-clad rocks had a softer hue,
 And sweeter the eglantine.

But sweeter far than the eglantine,
 Or aught that the dewdrop sips,
 Was the breath of the maid, Sir Robert vowed,
 Oft as he pressed her lips ;

And the light of her eyes was lovelier far
Than the blue of the dancing spray ;
And the sound of her voice better charmed his ear
Than the sweetest songster's lay ;

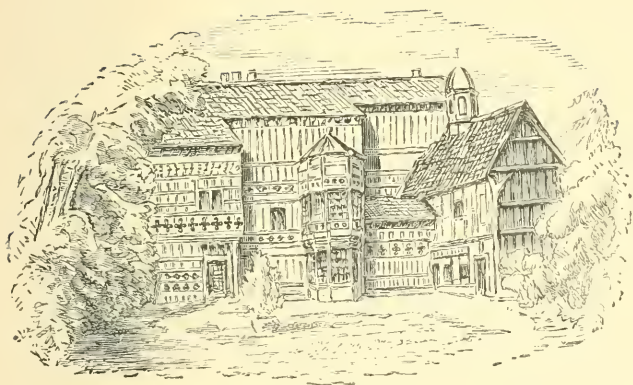
And the murm'ring whisper of summer leaves
Heard under the greenwood tree,
Were whispers of love, as it seemed to the ears
Of the knight and his Margerie.



BRAMHALL HALL.

BALLAD OF BRAMHALL HALL.

AS in most ancient houses, there is a haunted chamber at Bramhall which tradition connects with the subject of the following Ballad, some of the incidents of which were related to me by my friend, the late Colonel Davenport, the owner of the mansion. This fine old hall, perhaps the most beautiful half-timbered house in England, has lately acquired a somewhat melancholy interest, its contents having been scattered by public auction. It has ceased to be the seat of the ancient Cheshire family which for centuries owned and occupied it.



BRAMHALL HALL.



THE MAID OF BRAMHALL HALL.

FYTTE THE FIRST.

A WARRIOR rode through the beechen woods,
And by the elm trees tall,
And on the glistening casements gazed
Of Bramhall's gabled hall.

Bathed in a mellow golden light
The noble old house stood ;
Its framework all of massive oak,
Its carvings rich and good.

"Now, never a fairer house than this
Have I seen this many a day ;
Fit hall for a courteous knight, I wis,
Fit bower for a lovely may."

He raised from his brow his gilded casque,
And patted his coal-black steed,
As he rode out from the darkening woods
And on to the flowery mead.

And softening shades on the old house fell
As the day's long course was run,
Whilst the chimney spires of the goodly pile
Were gilt by the setting sun.

And the evening breeze now played with the locks
That were loosed by the warrior's casque,
And his lips were wreathed in a joyous smile
As he thought of his loving task ;

For thirty summers had wellnigh passed
O'er that horseman's well-faured mien,
And now he speeded to win and wed
A maid he had never seen.

He thirty summers had passed unscathed
By foe or woman's wile,
And now he came, with honeyed words,
A maiden's heart to 'guile.

He rode in times when safety lay
Not in a gentle word,
But rather in strong and well-clad limbs,
And eke in a trusty sword ;

And so in a suit of burnished mail
He had rode on his long lone way,
And feared no foes in the dark greenwood,
Nor yet in the broader day.

“Who pulleth so loud and long?” quote the knight,
As the portal bell rang out.

“No wanderer meek rang out that peal,
But an arm both strong and stout.

“Now welcome, welcome, thou gallant knight,
Welcome art thou to me ;
Yet methinks thou comest in martial guise
To win a fair ladie.

“But the maidens ever have loved the garb
That covers a soldier’s form,
And thy braverie well may aid thee now
A maiden’s heart to storm.”

The warrior laughed as he doffed his mail,
And his casque hung on the wall,
And glanced at many a battered suit
Around the ancient hall.

FYTTE THE SECOND.

“’Tis true, sweet Alice, I came to woo,
Thy father’s sanction given,
Yet would he rather his daughter give
A duteous bride to heaven,

“Than she should give her hand to one
Who could not win her love ;
Oh, beauteous Alice, tell me how
My new-born love to prove.

“On sun-burnt plain, on ice-bound field,
My life has passed in war,
A soldier at my sovereign’s call,
To serve him near or far.

“Oft in the battle’s turmoil fierce
My arm has borne its part,
But love my breast had never reached,
Till now untouched my heart.

“The stately dames of Henry’s court
No charms have had for me,
I better love thy native art,
Thy sweet simplicities.

“The rosebud tingeing thy sweet face
Is lovelier far to me
Than the warmer flush that dyes the cheeks
Of the maids of Italie.

“The truth that’s in thy clear blue eyes
In my heart I deeper feel
Than the fire that lights the darker orbs
Of the daughters of Castile.

“No belle of France ever smiled yet
So bright a smile as thine,
Nor fraulein ever so sweetly sung
Her lay by the castled Rhine.

“And I would dwell in thy love for aye,
Forsaking war’s alarms,
Nor list, unless at duty’s voice,
The call again to arms.

“Then tell me how to win thy love,
My deep devotion prove,
How gain a blissful heaven on earth,
The heaven of thy love.”

The maiden hung her head and sighed,
Yet never a word said she,
But the warrior knew the maiden loved,
And kissed her joyouslie.

FYTTE THE THIRD.

“Ho! to Bramhall, my trusty steed !
To Bramhall bear thou me,
Where the fairest maid in all Englande
Is listening now for thee.

“No laggard deserves so fair a may—
So swift o’er Cheshire’s plains
We’ll fly, and thy clanging hoofs, good Bess,
Shall wake the rustic swains.

“And o’er the forest, in bounding strides,
We’ll course till the setting sun
Shall find us in the dark greenwood,
Our long ride nearly done.

“And a lovely hand shall pat thy neck,
Thy fodder be of the best,
The sooner thou gettest to fair Bramhall,
The sooner shall be thy rest.”

Now, in Maxfield Forest he was ’ware
Of a train of horsemen bold,
Fleetly came spurring upon his track—
Fifteen when all were told.

“Now draw thy rein !” the leader called.

“Now draw thy rein !” said he.

“Who passes o’er this wild forest
Must tribute pay to me.”

“No tribute I ever will pay to thee,
Although I draw my rein,
And thou shalt fight, thou freebooter,
Till thou or I be slain.”

“Thou art no match for my men and me,
Though clad in suit of steel,
And thou must pay thy guerdon soon,
Or soon our vengeance feel.

“For I am king of this forèst,
And these my subjects all,
No man shall dare me here refuse
But he shall quickly fall.”

“Have at thee, now, thou robber knave !
If thou no craven be
Thou wilt fight me with thine own right arm,
And not with thy companie.”

But the robber band upon him fell,
And clave his helmet through,
And spilled the blood of as brave a knight
As ever England knew.

They 'reft him of his goodly gear,
And left him stiff and stark—
And his frightened steed to Bramhall came,
All riderless, at dark.

And o'er his corse the night wind soughed
Within that wild forèst—
And the warrior's soul had sped aloft,
And found in heaven its rest.

A cavalcade, at break of day,
Rode on a mournful quest,
To search where lay the warrior-knight
Within that wild forèst.

They saw a raven sailing high,
And heard his dismal croak,
And soon the hapless warrior found,
Destroyed by felon stroke.

They bore his corse unto the hall,
And laid him in the place
Where rested many a loyal knight
Of Bramhall's ancient race.

And long his hapless fate was told,
And many a saddened strain ;
And how his bride no tears had shed,
Yet never smiled again ;

And how within the lady's bower,
When sweeps the midnight gale,
Are heard the sounds of human woe,
And many a sob and wail ;

And rustling garments oft are heard,
And sounds that oft appall,
And still is told the hapless tale
Of the Maid of Bramhall Hall.

THE PALMER AND THE PEVERIL:

A TALE OF CASTLETON CASTLE.



BALLAD OF THE PALMER AND THE PEVERIL.

THE most ancient orthography of the name of Legh or Leigh that I have met with is *de Lega*, and this I have adopted in the following ballad. There is no written tradition of any alliance between the families of Peveril and Legh. The legend was related to me by the late Mr. Legh, of Lyme, and had been by him gathered in his youth from the cottagers and farmers on his estate, the class who seem generally to have preserved orally legends and traditions long lost in the families whose deeds they celebrate.

The approach to Castleton, in Derbyshire, from almost every direction, is over wild barren moors, bounded by lofty hills, not the least conspicuous being the fine mountain of Kinder Scout. The hill scenery bounding the moors on the road from Glossop to Castleton is in many parts exceedingly striking. The entrance to the village on the side of Chapel-en-le-Frith, by the pass of the Winyates or Winnats, is one of the finest in England. For nearly a mile the traveller descends a steep winding road bounded by lofty perpendicular rocks of limestone, simulating in their fantastic features ruined castles, Gothic cathedrals, and other picturesque forms. As the descent is accomplished, the valley in which Castleton is situated gradually opens, the ancient keep of the Castle standing out on a lofty summit overlooking the yawning cavern which forms the entrance to the Devil's Hole. On the left is the finely-shaped hill of Mam Tor, shutting out the valley from Edale, while the view in the distance is terminated by craggy rocks and peaked hills of considerable altitude. The village itself, isolated though it be, is of great antiquity, and has been

the scene of much romantic and chivalrous incident. The Castle, originally built and occupied by the Peverils, illegitimate descendants of William the Conqueror, passed into the possession of the Crown, and by grantees has been successively held. There is some probability that the governors or castellans, even after it had been forfeited by the original family of Peveril, assumed the name as a title, which may account for some traditional incidents not otherwise explicable.

According to Pilkington a grand tournament once took place at Castleton. "Pain Peveril had two daughters, one of whom, named Mellet, was no less distinguished by a martial spirit than her father. This appeared from the declaration she made respecting the choice of a husband. She firmly resolved to marry none but a knight of great prowess; and her father, to confirm her purpose, and to procure and encourage a number of visitors, invited all noble young men who were inclined to enter the list to meet at Peveril's Place in the Peke, and there decide their pretensions by the use of arms, declaring at the same time that whoever vanquished his competitors should receive his daughter and his castle at Whittington as a reward for his skill and valour. Guarine de Metz, a branch of the house of Lorraine, and an ancestor of the Lords Fitz Warrine, hearing this report, repaired to the place above-mentioned, and there engaged with a son of the King of Scotland, and also with a Baron of Burgoyne, and, vanquishing them both, obtained the prize for which he fought."

A further account of the combat is given in the poem on Castleton in this volume.





CATTLETON CASTLE.





THE PALMER AND THE PEVERIL.

'TWAS on a wild and barren moor,
All in the eventide,
A Palmer strode forth on his way,
A lady by his side.

“Now Christ thee save!” the Palmer said ;

“Now Christ thee save and see !

Alas ! that ever so fair a maid
Should be so sad of blee.”

The tears coursed down the maiden's cheeks,
Yet never a word she said,
But sobbed and wept as her heart would break,
And lowly she lung her head.

“The night wind soughs o'er the barren moor,
The sun goeth down blood-red,
The lightning gleams from the lurid cloud,
And the storm hangs overhead.

“ The bittern’s cry from the mossy pool
Comes drearily o’er the fell,
And the curlew and heron pipe plaintively
Deep from the marshy dell.

“ There glimmers a light from yon fair castèl.
Who is its lord ? ” I pray.

“ My father is lord of yon fair castèl,
Him I may not gainsay.”

“ I ween it were no knightly deed
To send thee forth in this plight ;
An’ thy father be lord of yon fair castèl,
Why roamest thou hither this night ? ”

“ An earl sits in my father’s hall,
An earl o’er many lands,
And my father would fain his daughter give
Into that proud earl’s hands.

“ And lord of many a fair castèl,
And many a wide domain,
Is that proud earl in my father’s hall,
And I may not remain.”

“ And why not thou in that proud earl’s hall
Its ladye bright preside,
And shine in bower and lofty tower,
That proud earl’s willing bride ? ”

The lady's tears now faster fell,
And she greeted mournfullie,
And wrung her hands in sad despair,
A doleful sight to see.

“A youth there came to my father's hall,
Alas, for that weary day !
I treated his love right scornfullie,
And sent him far away.

“And forth he went to the Holy Land
To fight the Paynim bold—
To fight him for Christ Jesu's sake,
And not for siller or gold.

“And now that he is lost to me
I feel my heart will break,
And I will die on this barren moor,
All for that sweet youth's sake.”

“Now nay ! now nay !” the Palmer said.
“Show me to thy father's hall.”
“The Peveril's castle is near enough—
Hark to the warder's call.”

Loud the blast the Palmer blew
As he reachèd the castle gate ;
The warder started to his feet,
“Who cometh hither so late ?”

“A lowly Palmer stands at thy gate,
Who shelter seeks for the night,
And fain would food of thy master crave,
For he is in hungry plight.”

They led him forth into the hall,
The fagots blazed and flared,
The Peveril sat with his lordly guest,
The sleuth-hound growled and glared.

The Palmer humbly crossed his hands
Upon his manly chest;
He bowed his head to the lordly twain,
And the Peveril thus addressed—

“A wanderer from the Holy Land,
I crave a shelter here.”

“’Tis granted. Of the Paynim force
What tidings dost thou bear?”

“My arm hath met the Paynim foe
On many a bloody plain,
Nor left I e’er the battlefield
Whilst Moslem might remain.

“Jerusalem is in our hands,
The Christian banner waves
O’er mosque and minaret. Our brands
Have wrested it from slaves.”

“Fill high the bowl,” the Peveril cried;
“Palmer, a health to thee.
Thy tidings are of the best, in sooth,
And fill my heart with glee.”

The Palmer seized the sparkling bowl
And drained it thoroughlie.
“Peveril, thou hast pledged me deep,
And Hugh de Lega thee.”

A wild shriek rang now through the hall !
The Peveril sprang aside :
His daughter lay upon the floor,
The Palmer knelt beside.

“What meaneth this ?” the proud earl cried.
“Here is some witcherie !”
“The witcherie of love well tried—
Try thou the rest with me.”

And from his brawny shoulders now
The Palmer flung his cloak,
And stood a warrior all revealed,
And thus the silence broke :

“When first I started from this hall
Thou bad’st me win a name ;
That done, I might return again,
And then thy daughter claim.

“I hied me to the Holy Land,
Resolved to win or die,
And never did I sheath my brand
Whilst Paynim foe was nigh.

“And Hugh de Lega’s name had now
Become a word of might,
And shouted by the English host
E’en in the thickest fight.

“At length upon the battlefield
My gracious prince’s sword
Upon my shoulder fell—I rose
A banneret at his word.

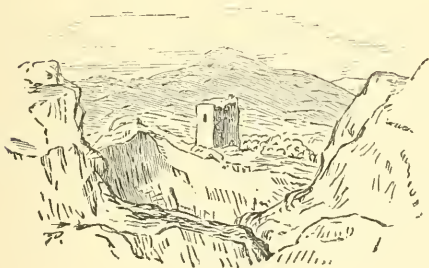
“And now I come to claim thy word.
Thou bad’st me win a name—
I’ve won it, and I come again
Thy daughter’s hand to claim.”

“And thou shalt have it. Here’s my hand !
It never shall be told
The Peveril to his word was false,
Or bartered love for gold.”

The maiden opened now her eyes,
Her lips were wide apart,
Sir Hugo raised her in his arms
And clasped her to his heart.

And now the feast eat merrilie
In cottage, bower, and hall ;
The mass was sung and the bells were rung,
And feasted great and small ;

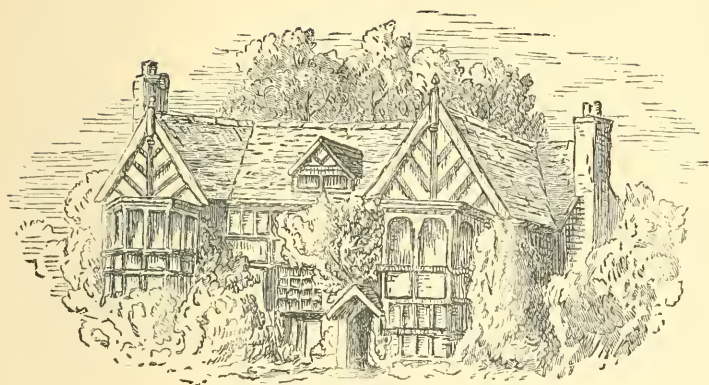
And many a peal rung out the weal
Of Sir Hugh and his lady bright ;
And the purple bells on the barren moor
Danced in the glad sunlight.



THE HERMIT OF KERSAL CELL.

THE HERMIT OF KERSAL CELL.

SIR HUGH LE BIRON, of Clayton Hall, near Manchester, after having served the king in his French wars, returned home and became a monk and the Hermit of Kersal Cell, for the maintenance of which cell he made considerable grants. It was attached to the Priory of Lenton, in Nottinghamshire. Some remains of Clayton Hall, surrounded by the ancient moat, are yet extant, on the road to Ashton-under-Lyne. The old bell turret, surmounting what appear to be the remains of the offices, is very picturesque. Of Kersal Cell it is difficult to say whether anything is left. A portion of the very interesting and ancient seat of the late Miss Atherton, still called Kersal Cell, is of very antique structure, and it is probable that the building occupies the site of the older ecclesiastical edifice.



KERSAL CELL.



THE HERMIT OF KERSAL CELL.

A GALLANT Knight he sallied forth,
And none more proud than he,
And the hall of Clayton rang with mirth
And shouts of revelrie.

“Down with the bridge !” the Knight he cried.

“Up with the portcullis !” he said.

Sir Hugo le Biron pricked his steed,
And from Clayton he gaily sped.

And there were with him of lances a score,
And twenty archers good.

“Ha, ha !” said the Knight. “Who would not be
Of merrie English blood ?”

But who is she who sits in her bower,
Watching the cavalcade ?

’Tis the Lady of Clayton, Sir Hugo’s bride.

“Ah ! woe is me !” she sayde.

And many a year there passèd o'er,
Sir Hugo he came not again ;
And ever that lady she wept full sore
As she thought of her true Knight slain.

* * * * *

They yield, they run, the field is won,
And shouts now rend the air !
The English hotly press their foes,
The French fly in despair !

Yet one there is in that proud host
No shout of joy can hear ;
No smile that warrior's lips hath crossed
For many a weary year.

His sword is deeply dyed with gore,
His shattered lance lies near—
Stern and sad is that warrior's mien,
And his heart is lone and sere.

No gladness to him doth victory bring,
His soul is sore opprest :
Sir Hugo le Biron looks coldly on,
And fain would be at rest.

There lieth a weight on his guilty soul
No penance can move away,
And he ever is found in the deadliest fight,
And eke in the hottest fray.

The wild, wild shriek of that maddening hour
Still ringeth oft in his ear ;
And he shuddereth now as it sweeps on the gale,
And his face is blanched with fear.

No human foe doth Sir Hugo dread,
No sound of the fiercest blast,
Save when it sighs o'er the field of the dead,
The wail of a crime long past.

Sir Hugo he turneth his steed away,
He seeketh no flying foe :
Death had he braved in the battle's van,
Then e'en let the vanquished go.

He seeketh the shore where once from his bark
He had landed blithe and gay,
But now he returneth a careworn man,
To guilt and remorse a prey.

And over the ocean again he sped
Back to the land of his birth,
Resolved from his home no more to roam,
But to dwell by his ancient hearth.

Sir Hugo to Clayton hath hastenèd on,
And lighter hath felt his heart,
When a muffled knell from the turret bell
Hath causèd the Knight to start.

And issuing forth from out the gate
A train came slowly on :
A sable pall on a coffin thrown
Bore his own escutcheon.

“Who is it ye bring?” said the trembling Knight,
As he nearèd the sad array.
“’Tis the Lady of Clayton,” a mourner said,
“Who pined for her lord away.

“And who art thou, thou wayworn Knight,
That rideth here all alone?
Why come ye to Clayton this doleful day?
Why look ye so sad and lone?”

Sir Hugo le Biron fell from his steed,
For deadly faint he felt.
“Why, who is this?” said the wondering host,
As over the Knight they knelt.

“Oh, I am your lord !” Sir Hugo he said.
“Bear me within,” cried the Knight.
Alas ! that ever I saw this day,
Or met this dismal sight.”

To Kersal Cell that Knight he fled,
And a hermit lone was he,
And he sought by prayer to expiate
The deeds of his chivalrie.

A hermit lone that Knight was he
In Kersal, whereto he fled,
And many a year of sorrow was passed
Ere he slept with the dead.



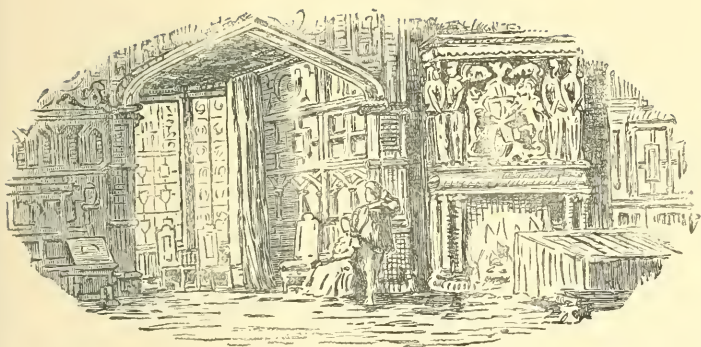
SIR PERCY LEGH;

*OR, THE LEGEND OF THE KNIGHT'S LOW AND
THE LADY'S GRAVE.*

.

THE BALLAD OF SIR PERCY LEGH.

IN the park at Lyme, near the Hall, is a beautiful conical hill, crowned with trees, which has been called from time immemorial "The Knight's Low," and is supposed to have been the burial-place of one of the earlier knights of the family so long resident there. In another part of the estate, adjoining a stream which runs through the park, is a field which has always been known, within record, as "The Lady's Grave," and also as "The Field of the White Lady." The ballad is founded on a tradition related to me, when on a visit at Lyme, by the late Mr. Legh. It is said that at midnight "a muffled sound, as of a distant funeral peal, is often borne on the wind, and that at this time a shadowy procession of mourners may be seen wending towards the Knight's Low, bearing a coffin and pall, and followed by a lady arrayed in white, and apparently in deep distress." The adjuncts to this scene were suggested by Mrs. Legh. The main incidents of the ballad are founded on fact. Sir Piers, or Percy, Legh of Lyme, Knight Banneret, following his grandfather's example, engaged in his sovereign's Continental warfare, and dying at Paris, of honourable wounds received on the field of Agincourt, was brought over to England to be interred.



THE DRAWINGROOM IN LYME HALL.



SIR PERCY LEGH.

HARK! what means that sound,
That low and murmuring swell,
That dies away and comes again
As 'twere a distant funeral knell?

Hark again! that wail,
Borne on the passing gale,
Breaking, from the neighb'ring height,
The solemn stillness of the night?

And see, the red deer, clust'ring round,
Intently listen to the sound,
And peer into the vacant space
As though some strange sight met their gaze.

And shadowy forms now seem to pass
With slow and solemn pace,
Bearing aloft some lifeless form
To its last resting-place.

And flitting o'er the moonlit scene
A female form appears in sight,
All draped in white and silver sheen,
With many a pearl and gem bedight ;

And following in the mourners' track,
She wrings her hands in sad array ;
And so the vision passes on
To vanish with the light of day.

And who is this they bear along ?
And who may be this lady bright ?
And what the legend, yet unsung,
Why they thus invade the night ?

* * * * *

High sounds of mirth rang through the hall,
And mingled shouts of revelrie,
For there had feasted great and small,
Men of high and low degree ;

And courteous knight and courtly dame
Surveyed the scene right merrilie,
For merrilie sped the frolic game
Within the hall of Piers de Legh.

The ox that roamed the forest wide
Had given his carcase to the feast :
An arrow pierced his milk-white hide
And stretched at length the lordly beast.

The red deer bounded o'er the hill,
E'en at the earliest streak of day :
The sleuth-hound followed on his track,
And brought the noble stag to bay.

The heron by the sedgy pool,
Watching intent his finny prey,
Was startled by the merlin's cry,
And fell to grace the feast that day.

And many a white-plumed swan beside,
And fruits from many a foreign clime,
Ortolans and beccafiques
Swelled the feast they held at Lyme ;

And flagons passed along the board,
Filled to the brim with foaming ale ;
And goblets flashed with ruby wine,
And merrilie sped the glad wassail.

And now paced up and down the hall
Lords and knights of high degree,
And towering high above them all
The handsome form of Percy Legh.

And on his arm a maiden hung,
More beauteous far than all beside,
Whose love-lit eye and blushing cheek
Told she was Sir Percy's bride.

And now was heard the noisy gong,
Booming through the spacious hall,
When quick arranged the happy throng
To tread the mazes of the ball.

And many a gentle word was said,
And many a flashing glance was thrown,
And many a gallant heart was pierced,
And many a maiden's peace was flown.

* * * * *

Now with horse and with hound the gallant array
Were out on the moor at the break of the day,
To rouse the wild ox or the deer from his lair,
And gather fresh laurels from many a fair.

Overcome by the chase, overpowered by the heat,
They sought the fierce boar in his sylvan retreat,
Yet the foremost of all, over forest and lea,
Was the towering form of Sir Percy de Legh.

And the bright eyes that met him when back he returned,
Were more to him far than the praises he earned,
Whilst the plaudits of all, of every degree,
Sank deep in the heart of sweet Agnes de Legh.

Thus the time passèd onward, and each day that came
Brought its measure of bliss to the beauteous dame,
Whilst Sir Percy to all was so kindly and free,
'Twas said none was so happy as Agnes de Legh.

* * * * *

Hark ! what means that clarion shrill,
Echoing o'er the neighbouring hill ?
Paled the face of the lovely bride :
She feared it might some ill betide.

In many a gaudy colour dressed,
A horseman forward quickly pressed :
"Hasten ye, now, from cottage and hall,
For the King hath need of his lieges all."

"To horse ! to horse !" Sir Percy cried,
Yet tried to sooth his wretched bride.
"My trusty sword—nay, never fear—
My greaves, my corselet, helm, and spear.

“Nay, nay, thou art a warrior’s bride,
And knowest well thy Sovereign’s call
Must be obeyed whene’er ’tis heard,
And it must be obeyed by all.

“Come, still these fears, and dry these tears,
No coward’s blood thy sweet frame warms;
Thou wouldst not with a coward mate,
Nor take a craven to thine arms.”

This said, he pressed her to his heart,
Then quickly tore himself apart,
Up into the saddle sprung,
And from his hand the loose rein flung.

And now the spurred and loosened steed
Started forth with lightning speed.
In one long look of agonie
She saw her last of Piers de Legh.

* * * * *

Hail to England’s gallant King !
His banner proudly floats on high,
And flaunts upon the Gallic soil,
The herald of his destiny.

And loyal hearts around him beat,
Obedient to his royal will ;
And Kentish bows are heard to twang,
And swiftly cleaves the northern bill ;

And many a gallant cavalcade
From Cheshire's plains might now appear ;
And many a proud and stalwart knight
From Lancashire, with lance and spear.

The noble Harry turned his eye—
With pride surveyed the numerous host :
Not one but for his King would die,
Nor make his loyalty a boast.

And now they came to Agincourt,
The Gallic foe appeared to view,
When quick the foremost ranks were thinned,
As swift the cloth-yard arrows flew.

Now the French impetuous rush,
Seeking their English foes to crush,
But each man to his henchman stood,
Nor ceased to strike till drained his blood.

And where is England's King the while ?
How bears the gallant Harry now ?
E'en in the thickest of the fight—
Around him many a fallen foe.

And still his horse he pressèd on,
And laid about him lustilie,
Yet had succumbed to numerous foes
But for the arm of Percy Legh.

His eagle eye the danger saw,
When quick his towering form he threw
Before his liege. His upraised arm
Swift the nearest foeman slew,

And still th' unequal fight maintained,
Till, with numerous foes o'erpressed,
His life-blood welled from many a wound,
And droopèd now his lion crest.

"The King! the King! a rescue here!"
The English host were heard to cheer.
"Bear, my friends, this knight away,
His life to me is very dear.

"Take care of him, for were it not
That he were here, I had not been;
There beats not in this gallant host
A nobler heart than his, I ween."

And now a very tiger sprang
The King into the gathering host:
They yielded soon on every side,
And soon to them the day was lost.

The English hotly now pursued
Their vanquished foes for many a mile,
But though it was a glorious day
The King was never seen to smile.

He quick repaired him to his tent,
Resolved the wounded knight to see,
And in deep sorrow o'er him bent—
“How is it with thee, Percy Legh?”

“My gracious liege, my days are o'er—
I feel my life's blood welling fast;
But heaven be praised that thou art here,
And hast avenged our wrongs at last!”

“Nay, say not so, my noble knight.
Thy King shall nurse thee tenderlie,
For thou didst save him in the fight,
And he will give his love to thee.”

They carried him to Paris town,
They carried him right carefullie,
And there he felt his strength was gone,
And gently laid him down to die.

“A boon, a boon, my gracious liege!
A boon I fain would ask of thee!
I left at home a fair young bride—
Be careful thou of Agnes Legh.”

They carried home his comely corse,
To lay him with his ancestry ;
And when they came to Macclesfield
They thought them of sweet Agnes Legh,

And forthwith sent a horseman on
To tell to her their tidings dree ;
She gave one shriek—and then no more
Her reason came to Agnes Legh.

They buried him within the park
Which he had left so blithe of blee ;
And followed in the mourners' track,
All gaily dressed, poor Agnes Legh.

They heaped a mound upon his corse—
A mound whereon the fir trees grow ;
And many a wail is heard at night
Coming from the good Knight's Low.

She rambled all the night forlorn,
She rambled forth all drearilie,
Till on the river's brink one morn
Was found the corse of Agnes Legh.

They buried her where she was found—
They buried her near the river's wave ;
And ever since the land around
Is known but as the Lady's Grave.

THE RED RIDER:

A LEGEND OF BRAMHALL HALL.



THE RED RIDER.

THE battering rain in torrents fell,
And the casements rattled loud,
And the fierce wind drove in a rushing mass
The dark storm-riven cloud,

And the lightning gleamed with a lurid light,
And the olden timbers shook,
And the storm-fiend flapped his ebon wing,
And the bellowing thunder woke,

And quickly followed the hissing hail,
And a wild commotion made;
And many a tree that had towered in pride
On the earth was prostrate laid.

And in ghastly fear the inmates pale
Were clustered in the hall,
When a crashing roar made the old house rock—
The timbers of fair Bramhall.

And loudly the bell in the ears of all,
The bell of the portal gate,
Kept clanging on with a dismal sound,
That never would rest or abate.

“What ho ! within there !” rose on the night,
And was heard through the raging storm ;
And the startled menials crossed themselves,
And prayed God’s help from harm.

And the wind shrieked louder around the house,
And a second crash there came,
And the thunder blared and the lightning flared
Till the old house seemed aflame.

“What ho ! within there, ye craven crew !
Can ye not open the gate ?
On a night like this, with the fiend let loose,
Must a traveller longer wait ?”

The massive gate on its hinges swung,
And with eyes that fiercely glowed,
A horseman, draped in a crimson suit,
Into the courtyard rode.

His coal-black steed from its nostrils wide
Sent forth two jets of steam,
And its flashing eyeballs shone through the gloom
With a strange unearthly gleam.

Its rider strode forth into the hall,
And bowed to the good old knight :
“ I crave your kind shelter here, fair sir,
On this dark tempestuous night.”

“ A terrible night indeed, good sir !
God shield us all from harm !
But a traveller needs to be strong of limb
Who encounters so fierce a storm.

“ Now heap more fagots upon the fire,
And let the supper be laid ;
He needeth both food and fire, I wis,
Who hath ridden so wild a raid.

“ Yet art thou less drenched and travel-stained
Than I had guessed to find,
And Macclesfield Forest is rough to ride
In such a gale of wind.

“ Nor art thou of these parts, I ween,
For my neighbours all I know,
But I ask thee not, for thou must be
Both hungry and cold, I trow.”

“ My ride hath been long,” the stranger said,
“ But the hail nor wets, nor stains,
And the howling wind hath my garments dried,
Were drenched by the earlier rains.

“And Macclesfield Forest is rough to ride,
And the night is dark and cold,
Yet little I reckon of tempest or storm,
Or the blast on the open world.

“But I love the warmth of thy ancient hall,
And thy supper is goodly too,
And the foaming ale in these blackjacks tall
I’ll drink to our friendship new.

“Yet am I not often a welcome guest :
The missives that oft I bear
Are but of ill omen to those they reach,
And bring both sorrow and care.”

“Now let thy missives be what they may,
Welcome art thou to this hall :
No stranger is ever refused here,
Or if he be great or small.

“And as for thy missives, I fear them not !
At peace with my neighbours all,
I have served my king through a long long life,
And never refused his call.

“My chamberlain now shall show thee to bed,
For thou surely needest rest ;
And I will my knees to my Maker bow,
Who ruleth all for the best.”

The sun was up when the servitors rose,
And many a scattered bough
Told of the storm on that fearful night,
And many a tree laid low.

But the stranger's horse was nowhere seen,
And the stranger himself had fled ;
And stretched on his couch, with peaceful mien,
The good old knight lay dead.



MARPLE HALL:

A GHOSTLY LEGEND.

MARPLE HALL.

MARPLE HALL, about five miles from Stockport, is beautifully situated on a height overlooking the valley of the river Goyt, and was the early residence of President Bradshaw, who sentenced Charles the First. He was a stern Republican, and resisted the usurpation of Cromwell. On his death-bed he expressed no regret for the part he had taken in reference to Charles, but stoutly declared that could the events recur he would act in the same manner.



MARPLE HALL.

HIGH on a craggy steep there stands,
Near Marple's fertile vale,
An ancient ivy-covered house
That overlooks the dale.

And lofty woods of elm and oak
That ancient house enclose,
And on the walls a neighbouring yew
Its sombre shadow throws.

A many-gabled house it is,
With antique turret crowned,
And many a quaint device, designed
In carvings rude, is found.

'Tis said, as when the moon's bright beams
Illumine Marple's Hall,
A headless form is seen to glide
Along the oaken wall.

Sometimes within the corridor
The figure flits along,
Or yet the darkly-panelled rooms
It noiseless moves among.

One room there is which none approach
Save in the light of day—
Ever the ghost to that dread room
Is seen to wend its way.

Anon upon the terrace walk
The ghost is also seen,
Encased in suit of armour bright,
Of steel and silver sheen.

And on the shoulders now behold
A head right proudly worn,
With waving plume and regal crest
On gleaming helmet borne.

And striding down the wood-clad steep,
And by the rippling stream,
The ghost is seen to take its way,
And vanish like a dream.

Time was when men in conclave met
With matters high in hand :
The kingdom was with discord rent—
Rebellion stalked the land ;

And arms and suits of armour hung
Upon the ancient wall ;
And clank of armèd heel was heard
Full oft in Marple Hall ;

And scabbards rattled on the floors ;
And men, resolved and stern,
Vowed that with their mailèd hands
Their freedom they would earn ;

And ready harnessed many a steed
Within the stables stood ;
And horsemen dashed at speed
The road through Marple Wood.

And news was carried to and fro
Of Rupert and the King ;
Of what befel the Cavaliers
Swift tidings they would bring—

How that Lord Strange at Manchester
Did threat the town to sack,
When the people rose upon their foes
And beat his lordship back ;

And how at Stockport still the men
Resolved to hold their own,
And vowed to keep their arms until
The king was overthrown.

And many a bloody fight was fought,
And many a bloody fray ;
And brother's arm with brother's met
On many a fatal day.

Father and son in hostile ranks
Were ranged for mutual strife ;
Perchance the bullet sped by one
Might speed the other's life.

And all through England's fair domain
Was heard the sound of war
Between the Briton's serried ranks
And legions from afar.

And still they fought, and still they bled,
And neither side would yield ;
The people held their own in towns—
The Royalists in the field.

At length news to the people came
The King was in retreat,
For one had risen from the ranks
Who never learned defeat.

And every castle that as yet
The rebel force had foiled
Was taken by that strong stern man,
Dismantled and destroyed.

And all the strongholds that were given
To loyal hands, in trust,
Before the will of that strong man
Were levelled with the dust.

And when his Ironsides he brought
Upon the battle plain,
Yet still the fortunes of the day
With Cromwell would remain.

On Marston's Moor the forces met—
The battle raged all day—
The Royalists were vanquishèd,
And fled in wild dismay.

Again on Naseby's plain they met—
The King was forced to yield,
His troops in wild disorder fled,
And panic struck the field.

And now, a hapless fugitive,
The wretched monarch fled ;
No place within his kingdom wide
To lay his weary head.

And now the people held their breath—
So terrible a thing
That men should be in conclave met
To try their rightful King.

And though he made a proud defence,
His foes yet willed it so,
His head should from his shoulders fall
By ignominious blow.

And he who did the doom pronounce,
By which his head should fall,
Came back at length, a broken man,
To die at Marple Hall.

And in no grave his body lies—
No tablet doth disclose
That in the sepulchre at last
John Bradshaw found repose.



CASTLETON.



CASTLETON.

THEY castled crags, their pinnacles uprearing,
Fling their long shadows o'er the winding pass,
And towering rocks, their rugged summits nearing,
Make deeper gloom within their hollowed mass.

And from their caverned deeps the rushing sound
Of falling waters comes upon the ear,
In hidden cataracts the rivers bound,
Then foam up from the mountain bright and clear.

Through the wide fissures made by earthquake's might,
For ages have they won their watery way,
Traversed the mountain depths in blackest night,
Then bubbled up to meet the glare of day.

And in the hills have scooped out caverns vast,
Whose glittering roofs fantastic forms display,
In pendant stalactites of snowy cast,
Which sparkle in the flambeau's feeble ray.

The humble swain, his humour here indulging,
Hath named these palaces that Nature made ;
The splendid pillars from their sides outbulging,
And gem-bespangled roofs that will not fade.

The proud nave's soaring height in thought he sees,
And noble organ, though for ever mute,
Yet through whose columns white the whispering breeze
Sighs for a response to his gentle suit.

Who shall tell how deep that vast abyss
From whence comes up the river's sullen roar ?
We hear the boiling waters seethe and hiss,
In vain into the dark profound we pore.

The Norman keep, that on the green-clad hill
Stands sentinel before these chasms wide,
Full many a tale of wonder yet could fill
Of marvels wrought by the outpouring tide.

Thou lonely relic of a feudal past,
In the long centuries that thou hast stood,
How many a grim defiance hast thou cast,
How many a siege and stern assault withstood !

The Peveril here once kept his high estate,
And in thy halls a princely rule maintained ;
Broken and dismantled, no worse fate
Is thine than nobler structures have sustained.

The lovely Mellet, warlike as her sire,
Called here the youth of Europe to her feet,
That in the onslaught fierce, and in the fire
Of battle, she might find a suitor meet.

But gone thy splendour, and thy halls no more,
One shattered tower, and at its feet the fane
Wherein thy warriors worshippèd of yore,
And left their impress, now alone remain.

So, when the grandeur of the past is fled,
And stately walls are levelled with the sod,
The humble church still lifts its lowly head,
Still hymns of praise rise to the throne of God.

Aye, when the pomp of chivalry lies low,
And frowning castles crumble into dust,
Still at the humble shrine the knee we bow,
Still rise the sounds of hopefulness and trust.

And yet will Fancy mount her wingèd car,
And people o'er again these valleys wild ;
We hear again the clang of mimic war,
Again behold the mailèd knights who filed

'Fore Beauty's seat, and bowed the crested casque,
And lowered the weapon's point. Ha, ha ! de Metz !
How burns thy cheek with love beneath thy mask,
What hopes within thy breast that smile begets.

In panoply of steel, with gold o'erlaid,
The glittering train comes on, and to his place
Each rides within the lists. The lovely maid,
The beauteous Mellet, who regards the race

Of valour from her throne, herself the prize,
Scans each warrior form with anxious glance,
Then, resting upon one, her sparkling eyes
Tell how her own hopes rest upon his lance.

And now the trumpet's braze sounds to the charge,
The proud hoofs shake the earth in their swift scorn,
And as the driving spear strikes full the targe,
Horse and rider to the ground are borne.

The heated victors, formed in fresh array,
Curb their chafed steeds within the bounds assigned,
Then, as the trumpet summons to the fray,
Again rush on impetuous as the wind.

At length remain unconquered in the ring,
On whom in turns the wavering favour sets,
Alone the gallant son of Scotland's King,
Burgoyne's bold baron, and the gay de Metz.

The princely Scot his fiery courser wheels,
And to the combat spurs in hopeful trust,
Before de Metz's stronger arm he reels,
And at the lance's point rolls in the dust.

On sable steed, impatient for the course,
Pawing the ground, and from its nostrils wide
Breathing defiance, held yet by a force
Stronger than its own will, in lofty pride,

Tall and majestic, on comes Burgoyne's lord—
A noble horseman and of stalwart frame,
His lance at rest, and by his side his sword,
He seems a likely knight to win the dame.

His sinewy arm on many a tented field
Has won the day ; on many a battle plain
His foes before his might have learned to yield,
Or sunk beneath his mace among the slain.

With gleaming eyes, through his aventaille seen,
The young de Metz regards his doughty foe,
Awaits the signal with undaunted mien,
Nor in his breast one thought of overthrow.

In hushed suspense th' expectant crowd observe
The warrior knights, as each, resolved and stern,
Grasps firm his lance, and, with a high reserve,
Trusts his strong arm the lovely bride to earn.

Now on they rush, and on the hauberk fair
The lances strike and shiver in their hands,
Recovering from the shock, the knightly pair
Quickly take them to their flashing brands.

And now the blows fall fast, the dinted helm
And battered visor show how fierce the strife
Thus waged in the effort to o'erwhelm
Each other for a prize more dear than life.

Sparkling as they meet, the clashing blades,
Fashioned in that far city of the East,
The fame of whose mysterious craft pervades
Europe and Asia, bend and coil, then, 'leased,

Rise gleaming in the air ; with one fell stroke,
Cleaving through hauberk, gambeson, and hood,
The welling stream his glittering garments soak
And Burgoyne prostrate weltering lies in blood.

Albeit no fatal wound the baron bears,
His sword no more his willing arm will yield,
His shoulder cleft, the cries he faintly hears,
That hail the victor from the throngèd field.

On bended knee, before the beauteous prize,
His helmet doffed, stooping her hand to kiss,
De Metz now feels the rapture in her eyes
Thrill his own breast and consummate his bliss.

In earlier times the Briton here pursued
His noble quarry over hill and fell,
Chased the antlered game with weapons rude,
And faithful dog whose bay was heard to swell,

And wake the echoes in these dark defiles,
With steady pace he pressed the circling deer,
With well-trained cunning met his many wiles,
Till sank the prey beneath the unerring spear.

Deep in the leafy gloom of oaken wood,
That canopied the valley's winding length,
With dauntless step the hunter oft hath trod
To brave, with well-nerved arm, the savage strength

Of wolf or boar, that in the cave had found,
Or in the close-set thicket, each his lair,
Ready to meet the sudden rush or bound
With conscious skill, and breast that knew not fear ;

Or in the river sought his glistening prey—
The silver grayling and the speckled trout ;
Or from the whimpering brook the sprawling cray
Furnished his simple meal ; a prayer devout

His Druids taught him rising for the feast ;
His drink the purling stream or crystal well,
That, fed with dewy drops that still increase,
Lay hid in shady covert of the dell.

A simple circle on the lofty plain,
Of rude unshapen stones from mountain riven,
Open alike to sun, and wind, and rain,
The roof alone the star-gemmed vault of heaven,

Served him for temple. Here, with awe-struck soul,
He listened to the Druid's solemn voice—
Saw from the pyre arise the vaporous scroll
Of incense from the blood-stained sacrifice.

With reverent breast he worshipped here the Cause
Of life and light, the Giver of all good ;
And heard from sacred lips proclaimed the laws
By which was ruled his scattered brotherhood.

Upon the barren moorland, bleak and lone,
Where sougs the night-wind in a fitful tide,
Beneath an earthen mound, with turf o'ergrown,
Still rest his bones, his weapons by his side.

Let no irreverent hand disturb his rest,
Nor scatter his poor relics o'er the plain :
His brethren laid him here in simple trust—
Here let his humble sepulchre remain.

The Roman, too, once made these wilds his home,
Bringing his legions from the distant south—
From the world's capital, imperial Rome,
Thirsting for conquest with a quenchless drouth.

The hardy Briton struggled with his foe,
Dared him to battle on the neighb'ring height,
And mossy streamlets reddened with the flow
From heroes dying for their country's right.

Their simple weapons 'gainst the serried ranks,
Full disciplined in war, were hurled in vain ;
Well greaved and helmeted, the firm phalanx
Received the fierce attack in proud disdain.

The length'ning road that stretched o'er hill and dale
Straight as the arrow's flight, the Roman laid ;
And fortress that o'erlooked the smiling vale
He raised against the Brigants' sudden raid.

These teeming mountains, touched by Roman skill,
Gave up their hidden treasures to his hands :
Rich veins of lead repaid his venturous will,
And fluor, begirt with amethystine bands.

The darkening blende, concealing in its breast
The shimmering zinc, of pale cerulean hue,
And earthy calamine, reward his quest ;
The golden orichalcum well he knew

From these to fashion ; and the silver bright
Forth from its dross of lead he also drew :
Wrapped in a sullen robe its beauteous light,
Till cleared by fire, lay hidden from the view.

And wondrous shapes to his astonished gaze
His tools reveal, as he pursues his toil ;
Corals, and shells of various forms, amaze,
That in profusion fill the rocky soil.

In countless ages past, when earth was young,
And ocean brooded o'er these mountain peaks,
The waters swarmed with a living throng
That played and sported in its bays and creeks,

Or in the ocean depths lived out their time,
Leaving their relics on its growing bed,
Till stretched the vast remains from clime to clime—
A continent built of unnumbered dead.

Time that in God's works hath no account,
Illimitable as the space He fills,
Poured forth its eons from a ceaseless fount,
As rose from darkness these once living hills.

What time the raven flapped his gory wing,
And scoured the White Horse o'er this harried realm,
His crowded galley brought the dread Viking—
Lust at his prow, and rapine at the helm.

A conquering rabble ravaged o'er these lands,
Urged by Valhalla's maidens to the strife;
Joyfully they left their yellow strands,
That in the battle they might yield up life.

Opeing the portals wide, with reddened hands,
Of Odin's halls, they see the bright-haired race:
The fair Valkyria wait, in lovely bands,
To fold their heroes in a fond embrace.

On Winhill's sloping brow the Saxon thane
Unfurled his banner to the sweeping gale,
Waited the onset of the fiery Dane,
And drove him vanquished back into the vale.

But fate, alas ! too soon reversed the day :
Again the Saxon made a noble stand,
When swooped the Raven on his destined prey,
And carnage marked his passage o'er the land.

Thus Roman, Saxon, Norman, ruthless Dane,
Each in his turn a baleful part here played,
Carrying havoc o'er the fertile plain,
And dark oppression marking all they swayed.

Yet suffering oft brings blessings in its train ;
No ill that hath not some attendant good ;
The evil of the past is present gain ;
Fair Liberty springs from the martyr's blood.

See now the race, of all the rest combined,
Hardy and brave, enduring, patient, wise,
Holding to freedom with a common mind,
Ready for this all else to sacrifice.

Eagle and Raven from this land are fled ;
With peaceful skill we cultivate the soil ;
No more the devastating hosts we dread,
Whilst teeming harvests compensate our toil.

These lovely valleys, with rich herbage spread,
A verdant landscape set with many flowers,
That from their opening buds a perfume shed,
And scent the gale that brings the freshening showers,

Smiling in plenty, nestled lie midst hills,
Upon whose flanks the purple heather blooms,
Whose misty summits form the leaping rills,
And flash in vivid gold as evening looms.

The lichen, creeping o'er the rugged rocks,
Makes beauty stains of every shade and hue,
Purple and orange, green and brown, whilst locks
Of silvery grey drip with incessant dew.

The ruby chalice of the tiny moss
In diamond-studded grotto hides away,
Rimmed with a fringe of gold, to keep from loss
The nectar treasured for the wandering fay,

Or in the dingle weaves a velvet pile,
Where plummy ferns shut out the fervid day,
On which, beneath the moonbeams' flickering smile,
Elfin feet delight to skip and play.

The gaudy pansy on the terraced height
Opens her bosom to the rising sun,
Basks in his rays till fades the waning light,
Closes her leaves and droops when he is gone.

Mounting in ether, hark ! the lavrock sings,
Soaring aloft above the mountain peaks,
How cheerily his matin song now rings,
As, bathed in light refulgent, still he seeks

To reach the nearer heaven, his glad wings
Beating the tenuous air in gleesome time ;
Then, sinking down to earth, his music brings
To where his mate sits in the fragrant thyme.

Yet once to me more verdant seemed these glades,
A richer purple hung upon the hills,
More gaily spangled seemed these flowery meads,
In brighter crystal ran the living rills.

More sweetly vocal sang the feathered choir,
That filled the woods with their melodious strains,
All nature seemed to wear a fair attire,
When last I wandered o'er these fertile plains.



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



THE MAIDEN'S REVERIE.

WHEN the lip hath lost its fulness, when
The eye is dimmed by time,
When the brow is lightly furrowed, and
The face hath passed its prime,
When the outlines all are sharpened, 'neath
A beauty that hath been,
Is the still sweet face as dear, through
A loveliness unseen?

Watch the maiden's pensive musing, watch
Her slowly-filling eye,
See the limpid tears descending, list
Her gently stifled sigh,
As memory is ranging over
Days that long are fled,
And the maiden vainly weepeth over
Hopes that long are dead.

The lights are shining brightly, and
The music's lively theme
Moves the guests to graceful measures, like
The mockery of a dream,
And words of love are whispered, as
She glides along the floor—
Words of love that will be whispered
To the maiden never more.

Through the casement of her boudoir, now
The soft west wind is blowing,
And the landscape lies before her, in
The mellow sunset glowing,
A youth bends down beside her, printing
Kisses on her glove,
His heart in all the utterance of
His fervent vows of love.

The forest now is leafless, and
The snow lies on the wold,
And a ruddy fire is burning in
The hall of Sturston Hold ;
A manly form is kneeling, and
In words of burning love
Tells the maiden all his anguish, tries
The maiden's heart to move.

Light and silvery laughter rings
In mockery through the hall,
As a smile of cold disdain had been
His answer at the ball.
Her words of shallow meaning had
The west wind borne at eve—
Shallow words, that, softly uttered, yet
Were meant but to deceive.

The youth looks in her face, and sees
That in her cold grey eye
There lurks no depth of love—no grace
Of mercy there doth lie,
And the love within him freezes, never
Looks he once behind,
As he passes from her presence and
Into the wintry wind.

A bright sweet face comes stealing now
In memory's crowded train;
A deep blue eye looks lovingly
A loving glance to gain;
A strong right arm is folded round
A form divinely fair;
And coral lips are pressèd 'neath
A shower of golden hair.

The years glide slowly onward, and
In memory's widening train
Happy little faces peer, and
Laugh a wild refrain ;
And the mother's form is rounded, and
The golden hair is pale,
But the strong right arm is round her, and
The love doth never fail.

And the lips that once were ruby
Still smile in loving wreath,
And the eyes of deepest azure,
Their fringed lids beneath,
Look fondly into orbs that see
No change that time hath made,
Save to lines of ripened beauty—see
But charms that cannot fade.





THE MONK.

IS it a mockery, that on that face,
Whose lineaments of passion bear no trace,
A cold serenity alone should sit ?
Is there no past on which the mind still dwells ?
No fond regret the painful glance yet tells ?
Memories that through the brain will flit ?
That gaze impassive on the convent floor,
That silent waiting at the convent door,
That humble attitude and patient mien,
Is it all meekness ? Hath there never been
Aught in the past to move that face serene ?
Was it a youthful acolyte he came,
And have those features always been as tame
As now they seem ? Has the daily life
Of convent rule, unruffled e'er by strife,
Been always his ?

Look on that lofty brow : no coronet
Could dignify what nature there hath set,
That princely form, and all the lines that grace
And stamp nobility upon the face.

Hushed in their narrow cells, and breathing deep,
Save one, the brethren of the convent sleep;
A solitary taper's feeble ray
Lights up the cell where one remains to pray :

Almighty Father ! once again I bow
My knee in adoration unto Thee;
Fill Thou my contrite heart with faith to know
Thy loving mercy will extend to me.
Oh, Father ! let the years that I have borne
This life of penance plead at length for me :
In nightly vigils, and till early morn,
My troubled heart still seeks its rest in Thee.
Am I not humbled ? Has not the name I bore
Sunk to the grave, untarnished, yet no more ?
Have not my proud habiliments been cast
Aside for ever, and this serge at last
My limbs arrayed, a monkish robe my vest,
A cowl where once a coronet did rest ?
But what are these ! Yet, once upon a time,
When my strong arm was in its manhood's prime,
I led the conquering hosts that swept away
The haughty Saracen, and kept at bay

The ruthless swarms that poured forth from the East,
Nor sheathed my sword until the ravage ceased.
But what avail a warrior's blood-stained spoils,
Or statesman's craft, that in its endless toils,
Involves both good and ill ?

The past is past !

Sudden as sinks the sun in orient night
Was quenched in a moment my life's light.
Day hath no brightness, morning, noon, nor eve :
My night is starless, and I only weave
Visions of bliss that might have been, had fate
Not willed, alas ! that I should be too late.
Unknown, unnamed, I live a living death,
Fit cincture for my brow a cypress wreath.
How short a time it seems since on the shore
Of fair Venetia, raised mid ocean's roar,
I planted first my foot, from war returned,
And heard the city's plaudits ! How I burned
Through the rank crowds to reach the palace, where
Accents more welcome to my longing ear
Should greet my coming—eyes whose dazzling love
Should light my soul to ecstasy, and prove
The bright reward for all that I had done,
The priceless meed for sufferings undergone.
Oh, fell revenge ! oh, trait'rous friend no more !
My arm avenged thy treason as it bore
Thee back unto the earth and bid depart
The trait'rous blood that coursèd through thy heart.

Could nothing satisfy thee but the lie,
That bade the fairest thing on earth to die?
Could thy foul tongue no other tale invent,
In lieu of the fond message that I sent,
But scoffing lies of lightsome love oft tried,
Till she who heard the story drooped and died?
Once, in the battle's front, amid the strife,
I slew thy foe, and saved thy forfeit life.
Could no meed meet thy gratitude, but I
Should live a life so purposeless and die!
Oh, lost Zenona! oh, my long-lost love!
Thine own Alphonso come once more to prove!
Come once again unto my longing sight,
Come from the vast abyss of endless night,
Cast the grave's trammels from thy radiant form,
Leave all thine earthly relics to the worm!
Oh, seraph spirit! lovelier than the star,
Bring, bring thy beauty from the vast afar!
Ethereal spirit, come! effulgence bright,
Come once again unto my longing sight!
Are all things dead that move not on this earth?
Can no fond yearnings give the spirit birth?
Will not the voice of love, that dieth never,
One moment move thee from the past to sever?
Then steep my senses in oblivion's stream!
Let my future be one constant dream,
Of which thou art a part! Oh, let me feel
Thy presence ever! Be my constant weal,

Be thou the angel of my future bliss,
And I will ask no boon but this—but this !
Father, forgive me if I loved too well,
And Thee forgot. Alas ! no tongue can tell
How greatly I have suffered ! In this cell,
I know, my thoughts should ever be
Of Thine heavenly choir and Thee :
Forgive me if they sometimes stray
To one as bright and pure as they.

But hark ! the bell
Summons to matins, and once more I go
With placid face, to hide my inmost woe.
Grant, oh, my Father ! soon its muffled knell
May sound unto the world Alphonso's last farewell !





A CHRISTMAS DREAM.

METHOUGHT I came from long and arduous toil,
And rested me awhile, and as I lay
My head upon my arm in weariness
Shaped itself from out the barren air
A beauteous form, clad in the purity
And whiteness of the snow, upon whose face
The hue of roseate health did lightly sit,
Whose deep blue eyes a gentle lustre shed,
And golden hair a halo made around her head ;
From out her parted lips did issue forth,
In words ambrosial that did scent the air,
A rippling melody of liquid sound,
Soft as the breathing of the water's fall,
Whose music lulled my troubled soul to peace
And told me of a love that had no end—
A love that was a refuge to the babe
Who sought his mother's eyes and generous breast,
Which filled the sister's sympathising heart,
And in the bosom of the cherished wife

Burned with undying flame.
And then the voice grew solemn and yet glad,
And told of love that loftier was than these
Of which the Newel was a memory :
And ever as the tide of Yule came round,
And darkened days upon the saddened soul
Did cast their ebon pale, rang out the peal
That heralded the birth of love divine—
A love that cheered the wanderer on his path,
And lighted him to heaven.
Anon I rose, and gazed upon the form
Whose violet eyes from under fringed lids
Looked from their wondrous depths into my own,
Deep wells of truth in which I read the tale
Of love eternal that mine ears had heard,
And my soul rose to battle with her toil,
And as upon my course I onward sped
Bright hope resumed the place whence melancholy fled.





THE RAILWAY ENGINE.

BEHOLD the Iron Horse, that the Englishman hath fashioned, as he waiteth in harness the will of his master !

He snorteth, he heaveth a mighty breath !

Lo ! the breath of his nostrils is as the clouds of heaven, and in his breast there rageth a great fire !

The coals of the earth are his daily food, and he quaffeth the waters with a mighty draught !

At the touch of his master he whistleth aloud, and rusheth on with the speed of the wind !

The neigh of the war-horse is lost in his shout, and the fleetness of the race-horse he leaveth behind !

He courseth o'er the broad plains, and the fields and the trees become dim in his track !

He traverseth the deep valleys, and maketh for the high hills !

He plungeth into the earth, and darkness encompasseth him !

He gaineth the light and the mountain fadeth away !

He leapeth the wide waters, and the storm hindereth him not !

Hark ! as he neareth his goal, how he shrieketh in his might, that his coming may be known, and panteth as he reineth himself in.



INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF A MANCHESTER WORTHY.

A WOMAN sat upon a step, her head upon her hand,
And forth she gazed into the street, and listlessly she scanned
The passers-by, as on they went, yet never asked for dole,
Although her wan and haggard look bespoke her stricken soul—
Her white hair straggled in the breeze, that drove the falling snow
And with it cold flakes mingled upon her troubled brow,
And yet she never moved nor spoke, nor told her tale of woe—
Her face was deeply furrowed o'er with lines that care had wrought,
And years had dimmed the light in eyes that once were lustrous
thought—

Her wrinkled skin, in many a fold, was through her raiment shown—
Yet still they passed and left her to her misery alone.

None cared to ask her how it was she sat in such sad plight,
Regardless of the wind and snow, and of the coming night.

At length, a quiet step was heard, and an old man drew near,
And gazed with compassion on that woman lone and sere.

“What is it, my good woman? Now tell to me, I pray,
Why thou sittest here so sadly on this miserable day.

The fallen snow lies coldly on thy ill-clad, wasted form ;
Get thee home, and here is wherewithal to buy thee something
warm."

Yet stretchèd she not forth her hand, nor uttered she a word,
But dully gazed into the street as though she had not heard.
"Come, come, thou art with cold benumbed ! thy misery makes
thee dull !

Come, let me be a friend to thee ! Why art thou sorrowful,
And answerest me not a word to all that I would say ?
Rise up and let me brush those heavy flakes of snow away !
Come with me, and warm clothing for thy limbs I'll try to find,
And food, or thou wilt perish sitting in the wintry wind."
Now a tear was seen to gather in that lonely woman's eye,
And coursèd down her furrowed cheek. At length she heaved
a sigh,

And wrung her hands in mute despair, and looked up hopelessly.
The stranger's heart was melted as he gazed upon her woe ;
"Come, follow me," he said, "come, follow me where I shall go,"
And put his hand beneath her arm, and raised her from her seat,
But she tottered as she stood upright, and scarce could keep her feet.
He led her forth right carefully—that woman sad and lorn,
"God help thee !" said the good old man, "thy clothes are wet
and torn,

And shield thee badly from the blast that's blown from early morn."
He took her where a fire its genial warmth diffused around,
And begged that some warm clothing for the woman might be
found—

Some cordial and some food ; for her pinched and sunken face
Told the hunger she had suffered in her cold, wet resting-place.
A clean warm bed he orderèd, and, said he, "I will come,
In the morn, and hear thy story, ere I find for thee a home."
"May the blessing of that God by whom I thought myself forsaken
Follow thee in all thy wanderings," cried the woman greatly shaken.

Brightly the sun from his orient bed rose in the eastern sky,
And purpled the morn with his fingers red as the hours flew
swiftly by,

And the spirit of night
Had with gems bedight
Whate'er was uncovered in lea or in dell ;
And the snow-flake hung,
Or in festoons swung,
From the branches that drooped o'er the dripping well;
And o'er meadow and lea
Lay the mist like a sea,
And the hills lay like islets therein.
But hasten we now,
For our story, I trow,
Lies deep midst the great city's din.
The snow lay crisp on the streets, I ween,
As at early morn a stranger was seen
Slowly to wend his way
To a snug retreat
In a quiet street

Where the object of all his care then lay.
He came to the house where the night before,
His errand of mercy done,
He trusted that sleep would the powers restore
Of the lone and stricken one.

At early morn the woman rose, for well she knew that he
Who had such kindness shown to her, still kinder yet would be.
Her stiffened limbs were scarcely yet obedient to her will,
And at her heavy heart there lay a weight of misery still.
“Now, tell me,” said that good old man, “now tell me of thy woes
And let me see if that I can some comfort then disclose.”
“I am a poor lost widow,” said that woman sad and lone,
“My husband died a week ago, my friend, my only one ;
And as he lay on his sick bed, my chattels, every one,
Were sold for food for him and me, until they all were gone ;
And when his corpse had left the house, and I was all alone,
I wandered forth that I might die upon that cold wet stone.
Five sons I had in early life, my comfort they had been ;
But they died in their country’s cause—they died to serve their
Queen—

And I have none now left to me. Oh, that my time were come :
And He who took them all before would call me to my home !”
“God’s will be done !” the old man said. “But take thou now thy
rest :

The Comforter will visit thee, and thou mayst yet be blest,
And learn to trust in Him who doeth all things for the best,

And in His own good time will summon thee to thy last rest.
Meanwhile thy time upon this earth I'll try if I can cheer,
Thou shalt no misery feel from want, nor hunger never fear.
I have some cottages that once I built for such as thee,
Thou shalt have one of them wherein to shield thy penury,
And food and raiment thou shalt have, and shelter too from harm ;
Now, go back to thy rest, poor soul ! thy pallet soft and warm."
"Oh, may that God who bendeth down to hear the widow's
prayer

Attend thy steps, thou good old man, thy footsteps everywhere !
And thou who dost such pity feel e'en for another's woe,
Unhappiness thyself ne'er feel, wherever thou mayst go."
The old man turned away his face, and uttered not a word,
Yet in his heart he often felt the widow's prayer was heard.





TO * * *

MAID of my soul, oh ! listen to me,
And I'll sing thee a lay of love's minstrelsie ;
I'll tell thee how all that is lovely and free
Shall likenèd be in my heart to thee.

Thine eyes beam mildly and free from care,
Yet the lightning's play lies slumb'ring there ;
When thy dewy lids shall those eyes enwreath
Who would dream of the mischief lies hidden beneath.

Thy breath, like a zephyr, doth ebb and flow,
Scatt'ring its perfume where'er it may go ;
Thy breast, like a billow of snow doth heave,
Which the wind hath curled on the swelling wave.

As the parchèd strand of the water sips,
So, maid of my soul, would I woo thy lips ;
As the amorous wave, too, kisses the shore,
With kisses I'd woo thee, my love, ever more.



LINES

*On receiving from a young lady some flowers of Colchicum autumnale,
or meadow saffron.*

A NYMPH, by Flora's beauties struck,
Wandered o'er the verdant mead,
The rose and eglantine to pluck,
Or gather the less fragrant weed.
And as in idle mood she strayed,
A zephyr with her tresses played,
And sported with her dark-brown hair
As if to seek his mistress there.
Her cheeks with ruddy youth suffused,
With no cosmetic vile abused,
Were, with health and beauty glowing,
All of nature's own bestowing.
Carolling a gladsome song,
Jauntily she tripped along,
When soon her laughter-loving eye
Did a beauteous flower espy ;
All pencilled o'er of lilac hue,
Deep'ning to purple and to blue,
With anthers all of golden sheen,
She ne'er so fair a flower had seen.

She long did on its beauties dwell,
And fondly looked it o'er and o'er ;
But what it was she could not tell,
She ne'er had seen its like before.
Anon she met a hoary sage
With whitened locks and bent with age ;
" Oh ! thou who knowest all things well,
And dost by wisdom's fountains dwell,
Tell me what this lovely flower,
I've gathered it within this hour ;
All its beauties I can see,
Now prithee tell its name to me."
" The flower with which thou'rt decked so gaily,
Colchicum is autumnale ;
And since its beauty doth allure thee,
Know, should ever gout *torture* thee ;
Then, sweet maid, this plant will cure thee."





LINES

Addressed to the late Colonel Egerton Leigh, with copies of some old ballads.

WHAT pleasant fancies
These old stories yet renew ;
The horse in his gay trappings prances,
And still our ardent gaze entrances
As again the scene we view
In tilt and tourney.
The rider in his panoply
Dashes on, his lance in rest,
Till prostrate by the shock they lie,
Man and beast.
Again we see the missile fly,
Sped by fairy fingers,
As the wild deer rushes by,
Roused by the sleuth-hound's cry.
With hawk upon her slender wrist,
Ere yet dispelled the morning mist,
Questing by the river's bank,
Or by the sedgy margin dank

Of dusky pool, the maid we see
Of our earliest minstrelsie.
How sweet that still within us lingers
The memory of the past ;
That poetry her brightest ray
Should cast on things now passed away,
And gladden even to the last
Life's fitful journey.





LINES

Addressed to a benevolent lady.

GENTLEST thou of womankind,
List, whilst yet Time's wing wafts o'er thee,
To my lay, nor blush to find
Thy deeds of goodness brought before thee.

Never plaint of grief, or pain,
Or tale of woe, e'er comes before thee,
But to thine heart 'twill access gain,
And 'tis for this the poor adore thee.

Of suffering and of sorrow e'er,
With pitying eye, thou'lt list the story;
The helpless orphan make thy care,
Nor e'er forget the aged and hoary.

Some in life have found their part
On battle-field, blood-stained and gory;
Thine to bind the shattered heart,
This thy mission, this thy glory.



LINES

Written on visiting the grave of a good abbot.

BENEATH this sod,
Waiting the final summons of thy God,
Mould'ring through the cent'ries thou hast lain ;
The tramp of hostile feet upon thy grave,
The ruin that thy virtues failed to save,
Brought thee no pain.

The downfall of the roof 'neath which thou prayed,
The walls, by impious hands thus lowly laid,
By a foul tyrant's covetous behest,
Thou heardest not ; the rude assaults of foes,
The clanging hammer, and the sound of blows,
Broke not thy rest.

The jest profane, coarse joke, and ribald song,
Where erst the solemn chaunt had swept along,
Rose through the soaring arches one by one ;
The mocking laugh and falsehood's gibing tale
Desecration made within the pale,
But thou slept on.

And silence reigns again where thou dost lie,
And centuries of years have glided by,
Whilst o'er the walls the ivy green doth creep,
And reverent footsteps tread upon the soil,
And reverent eyes now look upon the spoil
Where thou dost sleep.

And the rude hands that all the evil wrought,
The callous hearts and busy brains that sought
To bring destruction on thy noble fane,
Even as thine own now moulder into dust,
An olden tale their deeds of greed and lust,
Long past their reign.

The grandeur of thy work though they destroyed,
Yet our regret not wholly unalloyed,
Another beauty o'er thy work is thrown ;
Time hath his own mantle o'er it cast,
And hues and beauty-stains that long will last
Are o'er it grown.

Oblivious of time's protracted flight,
Thy good deeds written on a page of light,
For thee the turmoil of the world hath ceased.
Rest thou in peace until the summons come
To bid thee to thine own celestial home
A soul released.



THE PEN AND THE PENCIL.

S AID the Pen to the Pencil, "My footsteps have been
Where the river runs brightly through fields that are
green ;

Where the cowslip and primrose look up to the sun,
And drink in his light till his course is well run."

And the Pencil replied, "I have also been there
When the sunshine dilated the tremulous air ;
And the fields that were green where thy footsteps did
roam,
And the flowers and the river I've brought with me home."

Said the Pen to the Pencil, "A mansion arose
Where spectral old trees did a valley enclose ;
Where cedars and chestnuts their arms spread outwide,
And oaks that are leafless had grown up beside.
The walls were dismantled, and ivy hung o'er
In long waving branches both windows and door ;
And desolate seemed all the country around—
The scene undisturbed by a footstep or sound."

"I have seen," said the Pencil, "thy dreary abode,
Where the owl hoots at night, and where crawleth the toad;
And the ban I have felt o'er the scene that was laid
For a crime that hath been, though the actors are dead;
And the desolate scene and the mansion are here,
And the trees that are leafless and doddered and sere."

Said the Pen to the Pencil, "My heart is now light,
For a scene I have viewed that is lovely and bright;
On a terrace was flecked with the daintiest flowers,
A maiden was seated and counting the hours—
Counting the hours till the day should be done,
And her lover come home to the bride he had won."

And the Pencil replied, "Lo! the maiden is here,
And the picturesque hall in its black and white gear;
And the brave knight, her lover, comes bounding alone
To the home of his fair one, the bride he had won."

Said the Pen to the Pencil, "It seemeth to me
We are both of one mind; let us henceforth agree
That we go forth together, and whate'er we find
By the Pen be described, by the Pencil defined."





LINES TO A FRIEND IN SCOTLAND.

SO you think, my dear friend, that the land round Obàn,
Is the best can be found for a wearied-out man ;
Where the heather is purple, and yellow the whin ;
Where, hid in the mountain, the soft-plashing linn
Reflects from its bosom the brightness of day,
Or shimmers in moonlight, with ghostlier ray ;
Where the cloud o'er the landscape its shadow lets fall,
Or shrouds it from sight with a vast misty pall,
Which the sunbeams dispelling, the hills once again
Like islets shall lie in the wide misty main.
Down the deep-furrowed sides of the broadening hills
The mists shall dissolve, too, in sparkling rills,
And leap down in gladness to gain the far dale,
Where the landscape lies fair 'neath its gossamer veil ;
And the wide river flowing, by cloudland thus fed,
Shall glide onward to rest in its vast ocean bed.
As erst in the land of mysterious Nile,
The Sphynx met the day with her wondrous smile,

And Memnon awoke with melodious voice
The dark sons of Egypt, and bade them rejoice,
So now swells the pibroch o'er mountain and plain,
And welcomes the morn to fair Scotland again.
Hurrah for the "land of the mountain and flood!"
For its bonny brown moors, where the heathery brood
Is lurking in ambush; where, crouched in his lair,
The lord of the forest is snuffing the air;
Where the son of the soil with a light step is springing,
When with song of the Gaël the welkin is ringing;
Where freedom is felt in the spring of the sod,
And the heart gushes forth to the worship of God.





WRITTEN ON THE BREAKING-OUT
OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR.

LIKE the Visigoths of yore,
Like the Teutons long ago,
See a nation risen fiercely,
Hurling vengeance on the foe.

With a stern and steady comport,
With no "Bravas!" shouted loud,
With no maudlin thoughts of glory,
Comes the high-resolvèd crowd.

Muttered through the serried ranks,
Muttered through the armèd band,
"We will give the nations peace,
Or will die for Fatherland!"

The vaunting Gaul no more
Shall tread Germania's soil;
Cry havoc o'er her smiling plains,
Her cities fair despoil;

No more with terror stricken,
From her home the matron fly;
Nor maiden crouch in horror,
As the hated foe goes by.

Though the plains of France drink deeply,
Of our best and noblest blood ;
Though reddened be her streams,
With many a sanguine flood ;

Though the wail of mourning riseth
From each home in German land
For each manly heart that ceaseth
To urge the daring hand ;

Yet no mother would withhold
Her son from battle's strife ;
No fond maid her lover stay,
Nor husband the sad wife.

With beating heart each riseth
To his country's rousing cry,
To conquer or to perish,
The battle win or die.

Bearing arms of polished steel,
Cased in helm and armour bright,
Sits the Teuton on his war-horse,
Sits the Teuton in his might.

Not alone for martial glory,
 Not for boastful valour's might,
 Flies the Gallic soil beneath him
 As he rusheth to the fight.

As the Roman eagle once,
 By Italia's legions borne,
 Fluttered crest-fallen to the earth,
 From his standard rudely torn,

So the Gallic eagle now
 Droops his wings upon the plain,
 Midst the thousands of the brave
 By his fell ambition slain.

And onward still the hosts
 From Germania's forests go ;
 The soil must still be watered
 By their life-stream's sanguine flow.

But the nations of the future,
 The peoples yet unborn,
 Shall raise up trophies lofty,
 In their heart of hearts be worn

The memory of the heroes
 Who in Freedom's cause have bled—
 The memory of the heroes
 Who for Fatherland lie dead.



AN EVENING REVERIE.

FROM out the depths of night the stars gleam forth,
Raying glory from the vast afar,
The only finitudes that God hath fixed
Amid the limitless expanse of heaven ;
Points of light within the dark profound,
Whose threshold scarce is gauged by human ken ;
And ever as the gaze still penetrates,
By art advanced, dim rays of light appear,
And still there is no end ; the realms of space
Stretch ever outwards, outwards without bounds,
Extension infinite ; and who shall say
A dark and void abyss, beyond a wall
Of glittering orbs, makes up the farthest heaven.
Cannot such globes as sparkle in our sky,
In form defined, in number infinite,
In endless repetition fill all space,
Revolving by fixed laws through endless ether ?
In form attenuate, it hath been said,
A subtle fluid doth pervade all space,
Whose pulses thrill through grosser forms of matter,

Which makes the diamond sparkle, colour gives
To every beauteous object that we see,
Lights up the dawning day with realms of gold,
And sets the glowing eve in countless hues
Which gems the vault of heaven, and brings the stars
In many-coloured glory to our ken ;
Which points the constant magnet to the pole,
Brings from the fervid sun his genial warmth,
Gleams through the air amid the crashing storm,
Or burns with solar brightness in our midst ;
Conveys to distant lands our lightest thoughts,
And, could we bridge the space 'twixt other stars,
Would, in a moment, bear a message thence.
This universal link, this subtle spirit,
Lighter than all matter that we know,
Whose very properties are all unlike
What else exists, yet doth itself exist,
This breath of God, that through its wide extent
Doth govern all the starry hosts of heaven,
Is matter still, whose tenuous pulses throb
Throughout the universe, and bear the will of God.
As round their several centres turn the stars,
They feel the ether and are checked in speed ;
Their orbits, narrowed by another force,
The time must come when they shall cease to move
As separate orbs, crushed in a greater mass.
In time too far removed for human thought,
The orbs that now their courses round the sun

In well-known circles wheel, then sped along
In regions far removed. Where Neptune shines,
In dim and hazy light, perhaps the Earth
Moved in long orbit through a frigid space,
Whilst other spheres, drawn by resistless force
Unto the Sun, have made up his huge bulk.
Our Sun himself doth course round other stars,
Whose central mass, vaster than Sirius' self,
Perchance revolves around some central spot,
Spheres around spheres, whose centre is but God.
Shall all the orbs that glisten in the sky,
Impelled at last by this most subtle force,
Rush into one vast mass, one mass alone
Rest motionless in space, all else but ether,
And so a bound at last to concrete matter !
Yet what is matter, as we know its forms ?
"Centres of forces," once a great man said.
Whence come these concrete masses ? Have they grown
By gradual accretion of the dust—
The dust and gravel that in flying hordes
Rush in their countless numbers through all space,
Filling with motion all the outer void,
That to our ken doth seem so tenantless ?
What myriads crowd the heavens, to us unseen !
Little stars, that nightly visit us,
When the earth doth cross their shoreless streams !
Little stars that, hissing through our air,
Light up with sudden blaze the ebon night.

The chemist's skill hath told their various parts,
And all their elements have stood revealed.
The mightier masses of the firmament
Are such as these ; as these are, such are they.

How strange it seems

That in our human hands we oft have poised
A messenger from out the distant skies
That may for millions of years have coursed
Amongst the far-off orbs !
Or has each star been once a nebula ?
A subtle mist, a cosmic gossamer,
Filling vast realms of space, compared with which
The hugest globe is but a glowing point,
Doth, oft repeated, shine in the far heaven,
The mystery of whose being has been solved,
By its own light made known.
May not the atoms of this tenuous mass
Become approximate by loss of heat,
Through the long ages closer gather up,
And comets form or stars ?
Why should not space itself have once been filled
With widely distant atoms such as these,
Whose secular convergence now has made
The heaven we see ?
Not in the grosser forms in which we see
The universe material are found
The links which bind the whole in harmony ;
The real powers that move are never seen

Till Science brings them forth.
What knew we of an ether in the past?
Or modes of motion? All the wondrous play
Now called electrical, that, hid in matter,
Shaped so many courses to an end,
Light, heat, and radiant force, were all unknown
In their true attitudes and modes of being.
How many wondrous powers to us unknown
Are working in our midst their quiet will !
A few more years gone by, and things which seem
To us inexplicable and mysterious
Will their solution find, wrought out by powers
That man in turn will bend unto his will.
Who would not wish a glimpse into the time
Whose light is broadening in the far-off east,
To shine in lucid day for those to come !



THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

PR

4883

Leigh -

L525 1

Lays and legends of
Cheshire.

NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



000 373 294 8

PR

4883

L525 1

